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SELIMA,
OR THE
VILLAGE TALE,

A
NOVEL,
IN A
SERIES OF LETTERS,

BY THE AUTHORESS OF

FANNY.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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LETTER I.

MRS. ANNE AUBREY

TO

MRS. LESLIE.

MAY I flatter myself that my much-valued friend finds on her native soil some traces of her former happiness? That you can entirely forget those troubles which attended you in India, is too vain a hope to cherish: deep and heavy calamities, such as you have experienced, will leave a sting behind which time only can eradicate: there is not the lethean quality in present enjoyment of totally washing away the bitter taste of former pain; but it depends greatly

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B

on

on ourselves to soften and alleviate the anguish of a wounded mind. Few possess more mental supports than you do ; and it is your duty to Him who bestowed them upon you, to use them, as his benevolence intended, for your own advantage.

I do not wish, through the interest of our early friendship, to win your company at present from one to whom near relationship gives a prior claim to your attention ; but when that engagement is fulfilled, I hope you will not forget that mine, though last, is not least, if a sincere and unremitting affection can give it weight. I felt sensibly for your sufferings, when unavailing wishes were all I had to offer towards their mitigation : but now, by two changes in my family, my power is become almost unlimited ; and by informing me how I can render it most essentially serviceable to you, you will be teaching me its truest value : for I am sure your own sentiments will accord

cord with mine, that money can purchase no such exquisite luxury as the dear delight of administering to the ease and comfort of those we love : but I will say no more on the subject at present ; when we meet, which I trust will be ere long, a thousand little schemes will present themselves for our mutual gratification.

My present abode is a little box, which I have hired for the summer, about two miles from the town of —, and twenty from our old family mansion, which I quitted soon after the death of my poor father : it is situated on an eminence, which commands a view of a part of three counties, with an arm of the sea : it was built by a poor poet, and called Mount Ida : but, alas ! not long after he had completed his plan, the volatility of his genius overturned his reason, and the poor creature, in a fit of insanity, threw himself into a fish-pond in his own garden, where he lay many

hours undiscovered. Since this tragical event, the house has been supposed to be haunted; for which important reason it has continued some time untenanted. For my part, I cannot say that the poor, unfortunate son of Apollo has ever favoured me with a visit; perhaps he has carried the general worldly antipathy to old maids with him to the grave: at least, whatever *charm* I may possess, I think my living here will so effectually lay the ghost, that the landlord will be sure of his rent in future during the season in which an airy situation is agreeable; for it stands so high, and is so much exposed to the inclemency of the weather, that it is scarcely habitable in winter. I, however, find it a delightful retreat, and at this time particularly convenient, as I have a small house on my own estate fitting up for my reception. You may remember that Aubrey Abbey was in a very ruinous state before you left England, and as I have only a joint
concern

concern in it with my sister, I do not choose to make so particular and separate an use of it.

I laid down my pen to take my evening's stroll with my friend Mrs. Woodley, with whose connexion with our family you will find yourself already acquainted, when I inform you, her maiden name was Rebecca Keeling: She married an exciseman in the village of Aubrey, but having no children or any domestic concerns to demand her constant attention, she often devotes a portion of her time to my wishes, and in this solitude I am more particularly sensible of the obligation. But to proceed to the romantic adventure which happened to us on our promenade through the village of Barley Brow, which consists of about twenty houses or rather cottages (for few of them seem to aspire to any higher denomination) beautifully scattered on the declivity of a hill, the summit of which is covered with a thick wood, whilst on its

fertile bank Ceres seems to have exhausted her Cornucopia's choicest stores, we had not long enjoyed the beauties of the scene, before our eyes were arrested by a still more interesting specimen of the charms of simple nature.

At the door of one of the neatest, though smallest cottages we passed, sat a beautiful child, about four years old, dressed out in all the wild flowers of the season, and employed in decorating a little basket with daisies, which several others gathered for her, every one seeming earnestly emulous to present the finest to this little Queen of May ; our attention was naturally soon engaged ; but you cannot conceive my surprize, when, on a nearer view of the lovely fairy, I perceived, that although her language was that of the little peasants about her, her dress, voice, and graceful manner, were such as one should rather expect to find in the nurseries of people of the highest rank. Whilst I was caressing her, and
regarding,

regarding, with an eye of astonishment, the contrariety of appearances, which seemed to multiply as I considered them, a woman came out of the cottage, who, on seeing me thus employed, dropped a curtsy, and began to apologize for the dirty and crumpled state of the sweet baby's cap and frock, saying, "She is so full of play, there is no keeping her fit to be seen from one hour to another; she was clean from top to toe no longer since than this very morning, and I dressed her in her best things too, thinking, as it was May-day, when every thing is dizen'd out, she could not have a better occasion for wearing them: tho' I might have thought what a figure she would make of them in rambling about with her play-marrows. Dear! dear! if she has not tangled all the stalks of the flowers in this fine lace! What a fool I was!--it is entirely spoilt, I fear—and God knows whether she will ever have any more of the same sort."

“ Heaven blefs her!” exclaimed I, preſſing her to my boſom, “ ſhe looks as if ſhe was intended never to wear any thing leſs valuable.”

“ Why ſo ſhe does for ſure, your ladyſhip,” ſaid the good woman, “ but I do not know, it is now a matter of two years and a half ſince I have heard tidings of any body belonging to her, and I begin to be forely afraid they will make no more enquiries about her.”

“ Ho! ho! I gueſſed how the myſtery would end,” ſaid Mrs. Woodley, ſhrugging her ſhoulders ſignificantly, “ you never ſee honeſt men’s children cloathed ſo fantaſtically; no, no, ſhe will have no more finery, take my word for it, unleſs you are fool enough to provide it for her.

“ I hope you do not think from what I have ſaid,” exclaimed the innocent cottager, “ that the dear baby is come of diſhoneſt parents—I am ſure my poor ſiſter, who aſſiſted in bringing her into
the

the world, and afterwards left her with me, has said over and over again (and would repeat her words at this moment, were she alive) that there never were more honourable people born: and I have some letters from the poor lady herself, before she went abroad, that are enough to melt a heart of stone, that had any Christian compassion in its nature."

You will not wonder that my curiosity encreased. "Pray," said I, "do you think you would be infringing your duty to the writer, were you to indulge me with the sight of one of them?"

"Your la'yship!"

"Do you think you should do wrong, were you to shew them to me?" repeated I in plainer terms.

"O dear, no, not at all, that I know of; they have not any name upon them, and I had no orders to the contrary: if your honours will rest yourselves, I will fetch them in a minute."

Which she accordingly did, and immediately returning with the letters in one hand, and a black shagreen case in the other, addressing herself to me, she said ;

“ Mayhap you may be so kind as to give me some advice about these shining things that Madam sent me : I wish I had a bit of money instead of them ; were it ever such a trifle, it would have been a power better : here they be ; but what to do with them I know no more than the child unborn. If I take them to —, and offer to sell them there, folk will think they are stolen ten to one, and I may be taken up for a thief. Do look at them, Madam ; may be you may understand such goods.”

I took the casket at her request, which contained jewels of considerable value ; though I was then prevented considering them attentively, by my impatience to examine the contents of the other parcel, presented to me at the same time,
in

in which I thought I saw irrefragable proofs of a well-educated and worthy mind—though Woodley shook her head:—her greatest foible is the want of charity to forgive an error, to which her own rigid virtue is impervious. But I have inclosed the last letter, which was accompanied by the diamonds, as an example of the language which has charmed me, that you may decide upon its merits with more candour than my wary friend, and a judgment less prejudiced than my own. One idea suggested itself to me in the perusal of them, in which I think you will concur, that from many expressions one should imagine they were addressed to a person in a sphere of life much above the rank of our humble cottager; but that might be owing to the partial representation of her sister.

Be it as it may, the demerits of her parents cannot wrest from my sweet fondling the charms with which Nature has

unsparingly endowed her ; and to which she will be indebted for that asylum which she will always find beneath my roof, whilst I am possessed of one above the surface of my mother Earth. No sooner did my eyes behold, than my heart adopted her, and I cannot express to you the delight I felt on being informed that I should have no competitor in the endearing charge. Not contented with this unexpected addition to my family, I have prevailed with the nurse to entrust me with her own daughter, when old enough to attend upon her foster sister.

Notwithstanding the new occupation, in which my concern will henceforth be considerably engaged, my anxiety for your health and happiness can be appeased only by the favourable assurances I receive from you. Write soon therefore I intreat you, nor long confine yourself to that trifling instance of generosity, but hasten to gratify with your presence the ardent wishes of your sincere and affectionate friend,

ANNE AUBREY.

Direct for me at Prospect-hill, near —
 Not thinking myself one of the Muses
 or Graces, I have taken the liberty to
 vulgarize the name of my abode, that
 it may be more suitable to the mortal
 state of its present inhabitant.

LETTER

LETTER II.

INCLOSED IN THE FOREGOING.

TO

MARY DRAPER,

TO BE LEFT AT THE POST-OFFICE AT
—, TILL CALLED FOR.

IT is not proper or necessary, my good woman, to reveal to you the many cruel events which have conspired to banish me from my home, my parent and my country, and above all — It is too much, Nature shrinks with horror. Parent, friends and country—I could relinquish all, but for one dear moment to embrace my child, press to my aching bosom the smiling cherub, untainted by

by its mother's crime, the inexcusable crime, of obstinate disobedience. O! do not think I suffer that of base dishonour to darken the dreary prospect of my future days. Whatever miseries I may have entailed upon my innocent infant, she will not inherit infamy from me.—But who will shield her from the snares of sin, with which the world abounds? I alas! am doomed to leave her, and to encounter many perils: in less than five hours I shall have quitted England, from which happy isle I shall be absent some years, if gracious Heaven ever permits me to return. O! mercy—in following one—the other half of my treasure I must consign to your care—perhaps for life. O! that I could likewise transmit to your breast all that maternal tenderness, which would only render your task more sweet:—but it will not be—it must attend on me, like a persecuting fiend, to blight my fairest hopes, and add new terror to every danger.

I have

I have sent you all my jewels. At this miserable moment I can spare them better than money : I am unacquainted with their value ; but pray be careful, my worthy friend, to make the most of them ; for God knows they may be all the fortune my poor babe may ever be destined to possess—though by her birth entitled—but wherefore should I talk of birth, when it has not even secured to her that first of blessings common to savages and brutes, parental care ? yet let her not despise the authors of her being—no, tell her we were unfortunate but not criminal ; take care to inculcate in her mind a just sense of religion and virtue. Your sister was a sensible, good woman, she spoke highly of you ; and to discredit her testimony, would be to strew another briar in the already too thorny path which lies before me. But I must resign my pen, this is too enervating a subject to employ my mind at such an important crisis as the

the

the present ; when it is necessary to lay aside every female weakness to arm myself with resolution beyond my sex and age, to face dangers which I yet know scarcely by report.

May heaven bless my dear child !--- whilst I have life however fate may dispose of me, she will be the subject of my thoughts, my wishes, and my prayers. The picture, you will find in the casket, is reckoned an exact likeness of me ; teach her to esteem it of some value : for something tells me it is the only form in which she will ever view the features of her unhappy exiled mother.

LETTER

LETTER III.

MRS. LESLIE

TO

MRS. ANN AUBREY.

SUCH alleviation as woes like mine can admit of, such balsam as wounds deep as mine can receive, flow alone from friendship such as yours ;---friendship not within the power of circumstances to change ; though ever equally sincere, most active when the cruel hand of adversity calls most for its assistance. At the time when you thought your power confined, how liberally you administered relief to my distresses ! Had it not been for you—but I forget to whom I am addressing

dress myself—pardon me—I mean not to offend my benefactress.

You bid me exert those mental supports with which Providence has favoured me—alas! I doubt they are almost exhausted, but I will do my best. In the happy days we have passed together I was blessed with a flow of spirits, which might have baffled any common misfortunes—but mine have not been of that class, yet when I know my own disobedience was the source from whence they sprang, ought I not to kiss the rod? Most undoubtedly I ought—and do; tho' I have lamented my errors, I have never murmured at the avenging hand, whose just chastisement has brought me to a proper sense of my indiscretions. I am indeed reduced, but that is an affliction which I least deplore, for my heart is now as humble as my situation.

When my poor sister, whose weak spirits have suffered more, even from her sympathy in my misfortunes, than mine have

have done beneath the real weight of them, will consent to my absence, I shall joyfully accept an invitation, which will reunite me to one whose friendship was in my happiest days the primary object of my wishes, and is now become my only comfort. I never had too much pride to receive favours from you; and I hope I shall ever retain sufficient to preserve me from any despicable and sordid abuse of them.

How does the little happy Selima? sweet babe! she is yet unconscious of the blessed turn which fickle fortune has taken in her favour—how many mutual comforts will you receive from the event, if the infant's opening mind proves her deserving of your care: child of your compassion, she will awaken in your breast a tenderness little less than maternal. Heaven bestow upon you all that a mother hopes, and defend you from the wounds of disappointment, which rend—but why should I complain? Had

my,

my Matilda lived—she would have lived a beggar—let that thought console me.

On reading your enclosed letter, the heart is eager to acquit the writer of it of every fault excepting only one transgression of the laws of duty, to which, though flagrant, it must be rigid virtue only that can withhold forgiveness. For my own part I dare not aspire to such a privilege. And even were you to doubt her mother's veracity in the pathetic vindication of her fame, without the assurance you have given me, I should have been fully sensible that such a mistrust could not affect the interests of her deserted child in the breast of true benevolence to which kind fortune has consigned her.

Fain would I write in such a style as to relieve your concern for my enfeebled spirits, but it is a fruitless effort. Most sedulously do I endeavour to engage my thoughts in contemplating a renewal of that happy tranquility, which we reciprocally

proccally enjoyed, but a cruel retrospect will intermingle itself with present bliss. Time will surely strengthen my reason, and enable it to combat my feelings more successfully: till then adieu, I will write no more to afflict a friend, whose happiness is now the most interesting object to her ever affectionate and grateful

CAROLINE LESLIE.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

MRS. ANNE AUBREY

TO

MRS. LESLIE.

I Will not answer any part of your letter, which concerns yourself: I love you too well to indulge you in an error so detrimental to your peace as a continual propensity to meditate on the past storm. You must henceforth suffer me to gratify myself in making my little pet the principal subject of our correspondence: I long for you to see her, that you may justify my partiality by your own. There is not a beauty or grace attendant upon infancy, which she does not possess—in my opinion perhaps I ought

ought to say—Come here my good friend, and then tell me if the sentence requires that qualifying addition. What a delightful task shall I enjoy in the cultivation of a mind so richly endowed by nature! You tell me I shall feel for this lovely innocent little less than a maternal tenderness—and why not a little more my dear madam? You, perhaps, who have experienced a mother's feelings, cannot admit the possibility of their being surpassed in the human mind; but I, who have an undivided heart to bestow, unlacerated by the thorn of disappointed love, or the still deeper wounds of domestic troubles, must venture to flatter myself, I am more capable of enjoying the endearments of innocence in their truest purity, and of making a suitable return for them, than one whose mind has been disturbed by a less serene attachment.

Selima's former nurse, availing herself of the money she received from me in compensation

compensation for the little treasure she resigned into my hands, is going to engage in some trifling way of business in the city of ———, her native place.

I have intelligence that Heathcott has been some time ready to receive me, but as this would now appear to me with an additional charm, I shall have the house well aired another month before I trust myself within its walls.

On my journey thither, I am to lose my kind companion Mrs. Woodley in the village of Aubrey, through which I mean to pass, though it does not lie directly in my road—but I am fond of rambling, and generally extend my perambulations beyond their necessary limits, particularly if there is any thing to attract the wandering eye of curiosity within a moderate distance from my route, and I am told that the most modern part of our old mansion has quitted the venerable pile, with which in my opi-

nion it never agreeably associated, and lies prostrate on the ground, leaving the antient towers of the abbey in the most beautiful picturesque state imaginable.

Let your next inform me of the day on which I may expect to see you. I am half angry already, and shall be completely so if you defer the execution of your promise any longer. Present my compliments to your sister : I never had the pleasure of seeing her, except during that short Easter, which I passed at Hartlebury, and should esteem it a particular favour, if she would give me an opportunity to encrease our acquaintance by accompanying you hither : exert your influence, tell her, her consent will be productive of our common advantage.

This little bewitching rogue Selima, is trying every insinuating art to draw me from my employment, and there is no resisting her allurements.

I once

I once more conjure you to have compassion on my patience---no language can express half the happiness your presence will ensnare to your ever faithful friend,

ANNE AUBREY.

LETTER V.

MRS. LESLIE

TO

MRS. ANN AUBREY.

THESE few lines must travel speedily, if they arrive at Prospect Hill many hours before your poor friend. A sigh will escape, when I compare our former meetings with that which is at hand.

My sister, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot," is not the less grateful for your kind attention, though no influence can prevail upon her to profit by it. Disappointed vanity was the parent of her caprice: the loss of beauty and an accepted lover at the age of twenty-two, owing to the fatal ravages of the
small

small-pox, occasioned a most unfortunate change in her temper, and a disgust to society, which time seems rather to strengthen than diminish; and the very slender annuity to which my, too easily, deluded father was persuaded to confine her, has given the plea of necessity to an error, which was before only supported by discontent and chagrine, and must naturally soon have yielded to the force of that good sense, of which she is abundantly possessed.

I shall soon see your little wonder, and judge how far your partiality is well founded; or rather whether it coincides with my own opinion. I would do any thing to oblige you, but forfeit that ingenuousness which is my only pride, and which your example taught me properly to esteem.

At four o'clock to-morrow morning I shall be seated in the stage coach, from which I hope to alight in the town of B—— about twelve on Tuesday, from

whence I can walk with great ease, if it should happen not to be perfectly convenient to you to send for me.

O! my friend, the approach of this long-wished-for meeting casts a gleam of comfort, such as has not for many years enlightened the distressed mind of your grateful

CAROLINE LESLIE.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

MRS. LESLIE.

TO

MISS BECKWITH.

THOUGH perfectly sensible my dear sister of your impatience to hear some account of me, this is the first moment in which I have found myself able to acquaint you of my safe arrival here on Tuesday last.

My strength being much greater than my spirits, I performed my journey tolerably well; but the latter sunk under the conflicting emotions which overwhelmed my mind in an interview on which all my comforts on this side the grave have for some time been fixed.

Former pleasures, former pains, the delight of the present moment, intermingled with the bitterest regrets, rushed upon my senses, and heaven only knows how they would have sustained their united force, had not a shower of tears come seasonably to my relief. But I have been ill, very ill indeed—death seemed to be opening to me the only certain asylum from worldly care, and I began to flatter myself, that kind Providence had permitted me to sink into eternal rest in the arms of friendship—but I was mistaken, I already find myself much better, and must wait the divine will without a murmur.

My friend promises to reconcile me to the world: she has not experienced its unkindness, she is ignorant of the oppressive weight of sorrow. Alas! I know too well, that it is a burthen not easily shaken off: but endure what I may, her benevolence shall not suffer a disappointment—no, her generous soul shall

shall exult in the supposed accomplishment of its benign intention, whilst I in secret mourn over those afflictions which, though past in substance, will ever be present in idea, wearing, even in moments of the deepest anguish, an outward smile of counterfeit content. Can deceit be ever pardonable? Yes, my sister, in this instance I feel that it is even laudable, and an indispensable duty to that gratitude, which, every hour I pass beneath this hospitable roof, is augmented in my breast.

Mrs. Anne Aubrey (an appellation which I think she has too soon assumed) though somewhat different from what I left her fifteen years ago, retains all the most valuable traits of youth and beauty. Her countenance is still the index of her mind, her complexion is little changed, and her intelligent eyes speak the milder excellencies of a matured understanding: her person is considerably above the middle size, and has also acquired a

dignity inconsistent with the gaiety of youth ; her shape is confined within that happy medium, which the French call *L'embonpoint*, and in which they seem to personify the Graces.

I most sincerely rejoice in her late acquisition. Her liberal soul now possesses not only an object to exercise its munificence, but also to return its tenderness ; and the sweet *Selima* seems formed by nature to deserve so valuable a friend : she has been my constant attendant during my indisposition, and the various infantine arts she has essayed to amuse and compose my spirits, have proved her heart and understanding to be formed of such materials, as, when fashioned by time and instruction, must command universal esteem and love. Every lullaby tune she knew has been sung in the softest, sweetest notes, to entice the drowsy god to shed his poppies over my wakeful eye-lids ; but seldom with success ; and on every disappointment her
gentle

gentle bosom heaved an artless sigh: when I was able to quit my chamber, she offered me her mighty arm to support me down the stairs; and no sooner was I seated in the parlour, than, to testify her joy on my recovery, she brought me the contents of her baby-house, the greatest treasures she possessed; and all this from the mere effusions of pity for a stranger's sufferings. What will be the charms of such a temper when called forth by the superior sentiments of gratitude, esteem, and friendship?

Preparations are already making for a removal to Heathcott, from whence I suppose my next will be dated.

I earnestly entreat you to make yourself perfectly easy on my account; for be assured I never can be more happily situated in this world than I am at present: my distresses have added to the warmth of that affection, which, if any thing can alleviate the melancholy they

have entailed on my mind, is more calculated to produce that effect.

I know how fruitless is all the power of argument to combat an obstinacy so long indulged as yours—forgive the term, for really I know no other so applicable; yet if the passion of self-love is totally extinct in your breast, pray reflect, that you owe some little consideration to the peace of one, who has drunk deeply of the bitter cup of grief: if not for your own sake, therefore, be careful of your health for mine, and do not voluntarily add another wound to the tortured bosom of your

CAROLINE LESLIE.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

 FROM:

 THE SAME TO THE SAME.

WE arrived on Friday at this delightful place, which every charm of nature has conspired to render a little Elysium: so various are the beauties which contend for superiority, in ornamenting this romantic scene, that instead of attempting to describe it in my own, I shall take the liberty to borrow the more adequate language of an abler pen.—

- “ Here hills and vales, the woodland and the plain,
- “ Here earth and water seem to strive again;
- “ Not chaos-like together crush’d and bruis’d,
- “ But as the world harmoniously confus’d;
- “ Where order in variety we see,
- “ And where tho’ all things differ, all agree:

“ Here

" Here waving groves a chequer'd scene display,
 " And part admit, and part exclude, the day."

The house, which cannot properly be termed either large or small, but more elegantly neat, than superbly magnificent, is situated on a bank sufficiently elevated to secure it from any unwholesome damps that may rise from the brook which meanders through the vale; on whose border the domain extends two miles; yet this is but a small part of my friend's possessions: the land annexed to Aubrey-Abbey must yield an immense income to the coheiresses; and the rich personalty, which, thro' the parsimony of the old knight, had been long accumulating, I have been informed, on the death of a nephew, on whom the real estate was entailed, was left entirely to this deservedly favoured daughter.

On our road hither, we took a view of the old Abbey, and an impertinent tear stole down my cheek, on the recollection of the happy days I had formerly spent.

spent there; and our conductress not deeming it proper to pass within ten miles of her sister's seat, without paying her a visit, we accordingly crossed the country to Alvanley; where I own I should have spent a short time more agreeably, had not many circumstances concurred to persuade me that our harmless orphan was regarded with an eye of jealousy by the lady of the house.

When she was introduced, and whilst her kind protectress, with such inward satisfaction as nothing but true benevolence can impart, was relating her history, I thought I saw the execrable fiend settling upon the brow, and the following exclamation amply justified my suspicions:

“ Lord, sister! how is it possible you can be imposed upon by such romantic nonsense! If you choose to adopt some beggar's brat, nobody can controul you; but do not expect to persuade the world to share in your credulity!”

To

To which Mrs. Anne returned an answer expressive of the superiority of her mind, and far more gentle than the speech deserved, yet containing a sufficient reproof to prevent a repetition so repugnant to decency and humanity: however I had soon the pleasure to remark, that this transient altercation, so far from having any effect injurious to the innocent subject of it, called forth a thousand minute attentions, which otherwise might have been neglected, or checked as improper indulgencies: the visit, in consequence of such a reception, was formal, ceremonious, and short as common civility would admit of.

Our fellow-traveller, Mrs. Woodley, took leave of us in the village of Aubrey, whom I had also suspected of having cast a jaundiced eye upon the infant Selima; nor can I help entertaining some doubt that her sentiments, with regard to myself, are perfectly untinged with the same malignancy, tho' glossed over by the

the specious varnish of flattery and adulation, by which the good lady will never find herself much elevated in my esteem. If she fears that I may undermine her interest with my friend, she does me great injustice, and inflicts on herself an imaginary wound : I love Mrs. Aubrey too well, so to prostitute the influence over her heart, with which she entrusts me, as to make it an instrument to confine the benevolence of her feelings to myself.

Yesterday, as I witnessed many acts of charity in a ramble through the neighbouring village, my heart was softened, warmed and dilated beyond its usual bounds, and I involuntarily exclaimed, “ My God ! this is true felicity ! ” and the tears gushed from my eyes ; they were not tears of envy, my dear sister, but a sudden exultation, a pride, a consciousness of the exalted worth of the woman, whom I love better than myself—in short, an indescribable sensation
rushed

rushed across my breast, and produced this violent effect. My friend looked at me with tenderness, she pressed my hand, and would have stifled a compassionate sigh. I understood, but too well, the silent language, though she carefully withdrew my attention, and we spent the remainder of the morning in scrambling over rocks and brambles to gratify our botanical curiosity. Sure nature never exercised a more sportive fancy than in forming the wild scenery of this beautiful retreat.

To-day I was no sooner risen than I perceived the following billet upon my dressing-table, containing a bank-note for fifty pounds:—

‘ The inclosed, my dear friend, is so
 ‘ mere a trifle, that if you mention the
 ‘ receipt of it, it will be only to call
 ‘ forth a blush on my cheek for its in-
 ‘ significance; it is neither proportioned
 ‘ to your merit, or my love; but a fear
 ‘ of

of wounding your delicacy restrains
my inclination.

‘ In a few days a deed will be completed to make this little quarterly income legally your own. Let me once more seriously intreat you not to distress me with your thanks, as I could not regard them in any other light than as a just reproach for a token so inadequate to the affection of your friend

‘ ANNE AUBREY.’

Thus does every hour present some new instance of the universal generosity and singular affection of this amiable woman.

Selima is to be inoculated to-morrow; and, as you may suppose, we are not without some terrors on her account, though the general success of this fortunate discovery leaves little excuse for their indulgence; her beauty, which I trust by this means will escape the malice of its direst foe, improves daily,
and

and her capacity for receiving instruction is very extraordinary for her years. I fear only the effects of too unlimited an indulgence, to all the dangers of which I see she must inevitably be exposed if she receives her education entirely at Heathcote; but I flatter myself that the difficulty of procuring proper masters at so remote a distance from the metropolis will enable me to urge the propriety of sending her to a boarding-school with success, though I cannot say I am partial to seminaries of that kind, yet there are circumstances which may render them a necessary resource.

I am now, you see, become mistress of two hundred pounds a-year, and you must be sensible how much more than adequate one is to any expences I can possibly incur in my present situation. Your love for me may suggest a plan for the disposal of the other, so as to render it a source of real happiness.—I will say no more, only remember, if you refuse

to

to share with me a bounty, the whole of which I am obliged to accept, but have not the power to use, will make me not only deplore the immoveable obstinacy of your disposition, but painfully to doubt the sincerity of that regard which you have ever professed for your truly affectionate sister

CAROLINE LESLIE.



[To spare the reader a tedious detail of the uninteresting incidents of the heroine's infancy, I shall pass on to the time of her entrance into a boarding-school, and only insert such letters, during her stay there, as are necessary to give some idea of her natural disposition.]

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

WRITTEN SEVEN YEARS AFTER THE FOREGOING.

SELIMA WORTHY

TO

MRS. ANNE AUBREY

MY DEAR MAMMA,

I Like school of all things, I am almost ashamed of being so happy any where from home, when I think of your goodness to me: but really we have such fine sport, and Mrs. Frankly is not half so cross as I thought a governess must be. I have only been punished once, and that was for a fault which I shall not commit again, now I know it is one:
and

and what delights me prodigiouſly is, that I may write whatever I think without fear, for the directions only of our letters are examined. We have fifty boarders, and you cannot believe, my dear Mamma, what a riot we make when we are all together: were I as noify at Heathcott as I am here, you would be half diſtracted.

I aſſure you I am not a little proud of myſelf; for when I began to read, my governeſs asked me what ſchool I had been at before; and when I ſat down to the harpſichord, the maſter began to teach me the gamut, and you cannot think how he was ſurprized, when I told him I knew my notes already, and could play ſeven or eight tunes beſides; Monfr. too, with the drolleſt face I ever ſaw, and ſuch a tone that I was ready to laugh when he ſpoke, repeated all the French alphabet, whiſt I interrupted him, and cried, “ O! Sir, I know all that very well,

well, and I can say half the phrases and the vocabulary too."

He stared at me with such astonishment! but I soon let him see that I had not told a fib; but the grammar is the hardest thing I ever knew. I could as soon learn Greek, as all that jumble of moods and tenses, and verbs and adverbs; and I do not think they can be of any great use, or you would have taught them me yourself.

But you shall hear how my vanity was humbled at last, when I went into the dancing room, where I expected every thing that was charming, and there was I, as sure as you are alive, set to learn to walk over again. Dear Mamma, did not you think I could both walk and run, as well as I had any occasion to do, before I left Heathcott? I never was so ashamed in my life as when I was parading up and down the room, for the diversion of every body, no doubt, though my eyes were rivetted

to

to the floor all the time. I wish you would forbid this part of my education, for I am sure I never shall take any pleasure in an amusement, by which one must be so much exposed to observation. Pray tell Mrs. Leslie I shall never place any faith in her predictions again; she said I should be quite delighted with dancing, that I was formed for it, and a great deal more. Dear me! she never was more mistaken in her life, but I will write to her some of these days, and tell her all about it. Well—I vow! if the bell does not ring for prayers—only think how provoking!—before I have half finished my letter: but I will write the rest another time—so do believe, Mamma, that I would not have sent you so short a one if I could have helped it, and that I shall always be your very dutiful child,

SELIMA WORTHY.

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LETTER

to

LETTER IX.

MRS. A. AUBREY

TO

SELIMA.

YOUR letter, my dear little girl, is just such an one as I wished to receive from the child of my adoption, frank, easy, and unaffected: it proves the genuine sincerity of your nature: it proves that your mind is liberal, open, and undisguised. Never be ashamed of liking school better than Heathcote. I am not in the least jealous of the preference you so naturally bestow on a society, so much more suited to your age and the volatility of your spirits.

To

To deal honestly with you (though you must always remember that I speak as a friend, not as a governess) I felt much more gratification from your humility in the dancing-room, than your pertness to your French master, and the self-satisfaction with which you began your lessons. Pray does not your consequential ladyship think, upon reflection, that Mrs. Leslie and myself have an indisputable share in the merit of those improvements on which you have built so much conceit? and have you not the justice to allow us to partake of the vanity they excite?

Poor Selima! I doubt you would find your exultation but feebly supported, without the assistance of people older and wiser than yourself.

Whenever you feel your little proud heart swell with your own importance, consider what you or any of us should be without a superior protection. There is not one of the blessings of life for

which we do not owe the most submissive gratitude to the first great cause of our existence, and to those inferior agents which he graciously condescends to employ in our favour. Your ignorance of those parts of education, in which you have hitherto received no instruction, ought to be applied as a lesson of humility, as it certainly must prove to an understanding which I am happy to say cannot plead the excuse of any natural deficiency, that we know nothing but what we are taught. But I will moralize no longer ; I am sensible that much gravity and sentiment will not agree with your volatile disposition, and I would not disgust you with my correspondence in its infancy.

I know you are a wild chit, and pray most fervently that you may retain, unimpaired by the vicissitudes of life, that engaging vivacity, which frequently denotes a generosity of soul, and is, in my opinion, under proper restrictions,

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one of the most pleasing ornaments of youth.

Do not neglect your new studies, because they want the merit of having formed a part of your employments at Heathcott, particularly Grammar, which, though your great penetration has not discovered its utility, is of such consequence, that you can neither speak nor write any language whatever, without a perfect knowledge, and a strict observance of its rules. As for music, drawing, and dancing, I leave them to plead for themselves; their own insinuating charms are sufficient to enforce your attention without the help of my admonitions; yet there are other accomplishments perhaps more necessary, though not so ornamental or so pleasantly acquired.

Mrs. Leslie received your letter, with which she was much pleased, and intends to answer it soon.

Continue to write as you have begun, neglect not to let me know all the little

anecdotes of the school; for old women love news: and let me know the name of your favourite, for notwithstanding any jealousy it may excite in my breast, I am sure you will select one more suitable to your youth and gaieté de cœur, though not more sincerely attached to you, my dear child, than your ever affectionate

ANNE AUBREY.

LETTER

LETTER X.

SELIMA

TO

MRS. LESLIE.

SURELY I am the unhappiest creature in the world, and I believe Mrs. Frankley thinks I am the naughtiest too, for she has done nothing but punish me all day, though I would not have offended her, if I could have helped it; and I am sure you will allow, that I had cause enough to be in a passion.

If I were to die for it, I could never bear the sight of that frightful Miss Garth again: I really think she is the ugliest girl I ever saw in my life. You may think how I was provoked when

she called Mrs. Anne Aubrey a bad woman! but I will tell you, if I can for crying, every thing that passed.

My school-fellows are often teasing and asking me who I am, and whether Mrs. Anne is really my Mamma, though you know that is impossible, because she never was married, and so I tell them every day, but to no purpose: this morning they tormented me worse than ever, and cried all at once, when I happened to say so;

“ O! very pretty Miss, then you tell stories I find, what right have you to call a lady your Mamma, who is no such thing?”

“ Because she gives me leave,” said I.

“ What! then she encourages you to tell lies!”

“ She encourage me to tell lies indeed!” answered I somewhat spitefully I fear, but I should deserve nothing but malice and ill-nature, were I to hide my
own

own faults, when I am telling other people's.

"She never does any thing wrong herself, or would permit me if she knew it," and I could not help crying at the very thought; when unluckily up came Miss Garth, who is a great tall girl, and as proud and imperious as she is ugly and disagreeable, and in a taunting manner asked me what I was crying for, and whether the poor baby wanted a sugar-plumb; and I like a simpleton told her directly, that it was because I had been called a story-teller.

"Well, and so you are Miss," cried several of the girls together, "if you call Mrs. Anne Aubrey your Mamma."

"Is that all," said Miss Garth, "then you may wipe up your tears, dearee; if you never tell a greater fib than that, you will be a miracle of truth I believe."

"How can that be," demanded they again, "when she owns she never was married in her life?"

“ O ! that does not signify,” replied my cruel enemy, my Mamma knows all about this pretty Miss ; and she says that bad women have children sometimes without being married.”

To which I answered, “ that I was sure if her Mamma called Mrs. Anne Aubrey a bad woman, she was a very wicked one herself, and I feared her daughter would be something like her.”

“ O ! the creature ! does she call my Mamma names !” and in short they all flew at me like tygers, and worked me up to such a rage, that I must own, though I am sadly ashamed of myself, that I fought those I could reach, with all the strength I had ; till the noise alarmed my governess, whose presence put an end to the fray in an instant : but on her enquiry into the cause of it, my voice was so drowned by the rest, that the affair concluded in my disgrace ; and I have lived all day in a dark closet upon water-gruel, and am now only let
into

into the light that I may learn two lessons against to-morrow: but I could not begin them till I had given you an account of all that has passed.

And now my dear Mrs. Leslie, do inform me if it is really a fib to call Mrs. Anne my Mamma, or whether it gives her the appearance of a bad woman? I wish I knew my real Mamma; yet I do not like to ask her, afraid she should think I do not love her better than I could any other person.

There is another poor child here, who does not know to whom she belongs, and not being so fortunate in having good friends as I am, she is used ill by every body: I believe Mrs. Frankly thinks she shall never be paid for her board, and for that reason lets her be so ragged and shabby, it breaks my heart to see her. I will write to Mamma to give her something, or suffer me to share with her some of my clothes and money; for I dare not give her much without

asking leave: to be sure she took as much delight in vexing me as any body, but I cannot be angry with her because she is poor.

You cannot think how writing to you has comforted me: I was so miserable when I began, that I thought I never should be happy again. Do not shew this letter to my Mamma, lest it should grieve her, but assure her of the sincerest gratitude and duty from your ever affectionate

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

MRS. LESLIE,

TO

SELIMA,

POOR Selima! your patience indeed underwent a severe trial—I wish it had been victorious with all my heart:—then what superior credit would you have obtained! As the case stands at present, though I cannot condemn you without mercy, as Mrs. Frankley did, I am very sorry to say, I find nothing to applaud in your conduct—your passion was raised, and you did not make any effort to restrain it: however, sensible as I am that your affection for me is of such a nature, that you would regard
my

my disapprobation as more terrible than a dark room, and water-gruel, I will not inflict on you a second punishment, the first having been, I hope, more rigorous than the circumstances required.

I did not shew your letter to Mrs. Anne, and am very glad you did not address her on the subject: you may be perfectly assured that she is not your Mamma; but as for the particulars of your birth, they are involved in an obscurity so profound, that it is neither in her power nor mine to give you any light into them; even the few events with which I am acquainted (and they could not afford you any satisfaction) I do not think myself at liberty to divulge, without the concurrence of my friend. Let me exhort you therefore, my dear girl, to make yourself perfectly easy on that subject, and be thankful to that kind Providence, which has so amply provided for you all the blessings which

which you could have derived from the nearest ties of consanguinity.

They are not those, who set out in life surrounded by the most obvious advantages, who always make the most happy progress through it, of which my own history presents a melancholy example. Born apparently to the inheritance of affluence, by one act of disobedience and imprudence, I forfeited the protection and favour of my family, and was immediately deserted by that prosperity, which I no longer merited, and became a wretched victim of distress, to whose barbed arrows I had exposed myself.

It is to the munificence of your dear benefactress I am indebted even for my existence; her compassion followed me into India, and would have pursued me I believe to the utmost extremity of the earth. In that distant clime I was left the indigent widow of a man, who despised me for that weakness which I had manifested

manifested in yielding to his own artifice, with one child, a lovely girl, who, while she added to my necessities, seemed to beguile them of their weight.— But my ruthless fate had not expended its keenest dart: a consumption, which for some months had preyed on her delicate frame, bereft me of this last dear solace, on my return to England: but I am aggravating my own wounds, and I have said enough, I hope, to prove to you, that there is no situation, however exalted, from which our own errors may not precipitate us into the lowest abyss of misery; nor, on the other hand, is there any perfection or true dignity, to which a virtuous and well-governed mind may not hope to attain.

I think it will be prudent to drop the maternal appellation, which your kind friend has permitted you to use, except in addressing her. A name is of too little consequence to concern you, or to create squabbles in the school: peace
and

and good fellowship one would make a much greater sacrifice to ensure.

Not having with-held my censure where I deemed it necessary, I think it a duty equally incumbent upon me, to bestow on you those praises, to which you have as just a claim. Your sympathy in the misfortunes of your little school-fellow, is a testimony of a good heart, in which I recognise my favorite child : I have sent you a trifle to cherish the amiable sentiment ; it is not worth mentioning to our friend, to whom notwithstanding I wish you to apply, for I would not deprive her of the pleasure which your good actions are certain to impart.

Adieu, my dear girl, be sedulous to deserve, and you will be certain to retain, the approbation and affection of your sincere friend,

CAROLINE LESLIE.

LETTER XII.

WRITTEN SOME YEARS AFTER THE FORMER.

MRS. ANNE AUBREY

TO

SELIMA.

I Write before the time stipulated between us, to prepare you for the interruption to which our correspondence may be unavoidably subject for some weeks; being on the eve of a journey to Bath at the request of my sister, who is going to leave England, and does not intend to return of some years. By this unexpected change of situation therefore, I may be involved in such engagements as will interfere with the punctuality

ality I have usually preserved in this pleasing intercourse with my Selima.

Poor Mrs. Leslie is engaged in a melancholy office, having suffered a new affliction in the death of her sister, Miss Beckwith, whom you have frequently heard her mention: the event was so sudden, that she scarcely saw her before her death: I greatly fear this blow will renew that melancholy, which time began to dissipate.

I will not affront you by recommending a diligent attention to your studies, as I cannot justly accuse you of negligence: on the contrary, sincerity calls upon me to confess that every succeeding Christmas has presented me the satisfaction of observing that your improvements greatly surpassed the sanguine expectations I had formed.

Go on, my dear child, pursue the paths to perfection, in which you have so prosperously set out; and by encreasing merits draw closer to yourself, if possible,

sible, the strings of that affection, which binds the heart your innocence has won: and rest assured of the unchangeable affection of your sincere friend,

ANNE AUBREY.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

MRS. ANNE AUBREY

TO

MRS. LESLIE.

NEED I say, my dear friend, that I was greatly afflicted by the melancholy subject of your letter? The sufferings of the deceased Miss Beckwith demanded the tear of commiseration, during their continuance, but consider that they are passed—that death has released her from the wounds of pain, the stings of adversity, the ingratitude of the world; that she has exchanged a joyful existence for eternal blessedness and peace: consider this and repine, if it be possible.

I have

I have just heard from Selima. Her style is as usual, frank, easy, and confidential: native artlessness still prevails, unimpaired and undisguised, though highly decorated by the advantages of education, and the natural operations of time on genuine good sense. Sensibility predominates in her character, tho' vivacity forms the outline. I could dwell for ever on the expanding accomplishments of my child, and without restraint, from the consciousness that your feelings move perfectly in unison with my own, and will grant me pardon for any offence I may so commit against your patience: but time, which stays for no one, will permit me to say little more, and that little I fear you will expect to be dedicated to myself.

In truth, my friend, I am almost ashamed to confess that I am immersed in as incessant a whirl of dissipation as I ever remember having been: yet wherefore ashamed I know not, for my amusements

ments are all very innocent: I make no devastation on the purses, though I am an eternal card-player, or the hearts of my associates: Pam, the god of loo, and Cupid, the god of love, are equally inexorable, and reject with the same frigid indifference all the overtures of an old maid; yet there is a Deity who condescends to quit his drear abode, and gild my antiquated face with charms, which defy the ravage of age.

Laugh as you will, a Scotch laird, an Irish baronet, and an English barrister at law, have all bowed beneath the irresistible force of this magnetic power. The men take us all for fools: I should be almost tempted to resume the character of a coquette, and laugh at these mercenaries in their turn, were I not fully sensible, that I must submit to bear more than an equal participation in the ridicule I should excite.

I have been thinking, with infinite regret, on the melancholy solitude in which
you

you are plunged by my absence at this unfortunate juncture: were it possible to prevail on you to change the scene, I have an opportunity of engaging very pleasant and convenient apartments for your reception, in the house adjoining to my sister's, and am certain you would experience the most salutary effects from the removal. I wish I could give you an invitation to this, but to acknowledge a painful truth, there are circumstances, with regard to my present visit, which render my own situation somewhat irksome. Pray do not attribute this mysterious mode of expression to a want of sufficient confidence in your friendship, or a fear of reposing in your breast the inmost secrets of my heart: but the subject is most distressing, and time presses—I will take another opportunity of being more explicit. In the mean time believe me most sincerely yours,

ANNE AUBREY.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

 FROM THE SAME

TO

 THE SAME.

YOUR letter is arrived, but my spirits are too greatly agitated at this moment to permit me to reply to its contents. If I rightly recollect, I concluded mine, promising to share with you every sentiment of my soul—let me then seize the present juncture, almost the bitterest of my life, to steal from sympathising friendship, that consolation which it alone can impart.

You, who have literally been my only sister, if the connexion is denoted by a sincere and invariable affection, are un-

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acquainted

acquainted with the numerous circumstances, which have estranged my heart from her, who through the force of consanguinity holds the endearing name.

A considerable difference in our ages, and our being separated during the time of our education, were undoubtedly casualties not calculated to form the basis of a tender friendship: and others also succeeded them, still more inimical to its existence.

At the time of my sister's marriage, yours, which had but lately taken place, with the unhappy incidents attending it, was in some measure a check upon our correspondence, entirely formed the subject of the few letters which passed between us; and spared me the confession of a weakness, which time only, without confusion, has enabled me to disclose.

Know then at once, that the husband of my sister was the only man, for whom I ever felt a tender partiality: his person was noble, elegant, and interesting,
and

and his heart was the gem, which might be expected from such a casket, but it was devoted to another, and I believe you know me too well to suppose that an unreturned affection could long disturb the peace of a mind so proud and volatile as mine.

My successful rival triumphed only in an ostentatious display of her jewels, dress, and equipage. Entirely engrossed by the subtle influence of vanity and ambition, the softer sensations of esteem and love found no access to her heart—dissipation marked her character: nor did the birth of a son, her own widowhood, which soon succeeded, and the death of her father, suffice to detach her mind from its allurements, to which, notwithstanding, I sincerely hope she yielded not beyond the bounds of innocence and virtue, though the world has cast forth insinuations against her character of so black a nature, that my blood recoils at the possibility of their

being just. However, with the deepest concern I must confess, that the whole tenor of her subsequent conduct, together with her second union with the very man for whom she *at least destroyed* the peace of mind of his amiable predecessor, baffles every effort of vindication.

From this imperfect revival of a history in which I feel myself too much interested, I think you may form some idea of the sensations which must ever pervade my breast, at the approach of an interview with a woman, whom nature urges me to love, and reason forbids me to esteem. Respect for the memory of the best of fathers, has, for some time, been the only bond of intimacy between us; and permanent as that cement might have been, it is now entirely dissolved. The injuries I have this day received, will not admit of palliation.

Not

Not having the prudence to pocket a letter from Selima, unfortunately delivered to me at breakfast, without some expression of pleasure on the receipt of it, this welcome pledge of her affection proved the innocent attractor of a torrent of abuse, of which the language I am accustomed to will not convey any comparative idea. The illiberal invectives and gross abuse poured on me before I was able to reply, would disgrace me to repeat, and wound your feelings to peruse: Mr. Gowarth, with disdain in his countenance, rang the bell, and begged to be wheeled off from the field of battle, leaving me to sustain the fury of his enraged help-mate. Poor wretch! —but pity for his bodily infirmities suppresses that contempt his character deserves.

Little do you think to what vile insinuations I have been subjected. Sometimes accused of deserting the interests of my nephew, the only surviving hope

of his family, to lavish my substance on the offspring of beggary and vice; at others even reflected on as the infamous parent of this obnoxious child, to whom I hold myself engaged in the most sacred bonds of duty, as well as love, to support her through life in the situation wherein I have placed her. But she shall not be the victim of that insatiate avarice which could grasp the globe, dissatisfied with its possessions.

Impolitic as my sister's behaviour must appear to an impartial judgment, it will not bias me, to confound the innocent with the guilty: notwithstanding the resentment it must reasonably be supposed to have enkindled in my breast, it will not obliterate the recollection, that her son is my nephew, that he is not answerable for the misconduct of his mother, and that he is the descendant of a man, whom, during his life, I thought it an honour to call by the endearing appellation of brother, whose death I have

Have most sincerely lamented, and whose memory I shall never cease to respect.

To this, then, my natural and acknowledged heir, my fortune will entirely devolve, excepting only (comparatively speaking) an inconsiderable sum, reserved for the gratification of private friendship, and that disposition towards the relief of indigence, which I trust will ever exist with unabated ardour in my breast, whilst a vital spirit animates my frame.

My nephew will abound in wealth; the splendid fortune of his father's illustrious family, together with his mother's, and my own, all centre in himself, and ill would he deserve the partial dispensations of the fickle goddess, did he possess a meanness of soul which could permit him to repine at the appropriation of a sum which he can never want, to the use and accommodation of those who do.

E. 4

Though

Though my first scheme is frustrated, I have already planned one, in the execution of which I cannot doubt your concurrence, as the proposal I am about to make not merely adverts to your own advantage, but includes also the health and satisfaction of one, whom I know you would sacrifice every thing to serve. In short, my spirits, deranged and almost entirely overcome, demand more lenient restoratives than crowds and noise can administer; and the spring advancing in all its wonted luxuriance to favour the design, I have been meditating an excursion into South Wales.

Scenes, where the prolific hand of Nature assembles all its various charms at once to awe, delight and captivate the soul, are best calculated to deface the false images of discontent, and recal the gloomy mind to a grateful participation of those blessings which an indulgent Providence still invites it to enjoy.

Come,

Come, my friend, deliberate not a moment on this proposal ; but on Monday se'nnight place yourself in the old chariot I left behind me, and with a pair of horses from F——, you will, with moderate expedition, meet me about noon the next day, at ——, from whence we will

“ Together rove

“ Free and unquestioned in the wilds”—

Not of love—those are rocks, precipices and dangers we shall no more encounter—but of variegated Nature, following only the airy footsteps of untutored fancy. Surely such a scheme of rational pleasure calls not for the aid of persuasion to obtain the approbation of one whose mind is naturally formed for such enjoyments, and whose understanding, were it suffered to controul, could well supply sufficient force for the total expulsion of unavailing sorrows, which, though it

would be apathy never to feel, it is impiety to cherish.

Adieu, on Tuesday next I shall expect your answer, which, instead of being directed to me as usual, at the house of Edmund Gowarth, Esq. will find me with Mrs. — and Co. milliners, in — street, and I trust you will not suffer it to disappoint the wishes of your very sincere friend,

ANNE AUBREY.

LETTER

LETTER XV.

MRS. LESLIE

TO

SELIMA.

IT is a most painful office to be the messenger of ill news, and I may venture to say to no one more irksome than myself; but alas! it is not the lot of mortality to govern the exigencies of life: we must take the evil and the good as they present themselves, and submit to the decrees of fate with resignation; therefore arm yourself, my dear Selima, with resolution, to encounter the *dreadful* sentence I am deputed to denounce against you; for, soften it as I can, it amounts to no less than an order for

E. 6

your

your final departure from school: yet do not suffer your spirits to be totally depressed by so *terrible a mandate*. Who knows but a remonstrance may avail? You are not insensible of the indulgent tenderness of Mrs. Aubrey, and, for my own part, I am fully persuaded, that she would even relinquish the enjoyment of your company to prolong your happiness: but if, on the contrary, you can *summon sufficient fortitude* to yield to the severe decree, Mrs. Bolland will, on Wednesday next, attend you hither, where you will be impatiently expected, and received with a sincere welcome. Being just returned from our excursion, and my friend being engaged in more necessary, though less agreeable, avocations, I am appointed the herald of her wishes. Scarcely does her eye contemplate a charm of nature or of art, or her heart feel a satisfaction, but she exclaims, How would it delight my Selima! Frequently do I smile and rally her

her enthusiasm without the power of resisting the contagion. How grateful ought you to be for an affection so wonderful and unbounded. Do not think, that by the word *ought*, I mean to cast any reflection on your feelings, or that by it I would imply, that they do not move perfectly in unison with your duty ; on the contrary, often do I rejoice in the natural concordance of your sentiments with those of your protectress : it is in your power to realize or disappoint my expectations. Time, the great alchymist, can alone analyze the secret dispositions of the heart, on whose future informations hang the hopes of your friends ; in which class, to the utmost degree of unprofitable affection, I will venture to rank your devoted

CAROLINE LESLIE.

LETTER

LETTER XVI.

SELIMA

TO

MRS. LESLIE.

HOW could you be so unmerciful, my dear madam? The first line of your letter so terrified me, that I dreaded to proceed, expecting some dire calamity, which, though my imagination could not describe, my heart shuddered to encounter: little did I dream of the joy which was to ensue, and yet, I believe, as you have often told me, there is no pleasure in life without its attendant pain. Ought I not to blush when I acknowledge

knowledge, that although I contemplate my arrival at Heathcote with all that unmixed gratitude which my happy situation demands, when I cast a thought on my (probably) final separation from so many, for all of whom, either from esteem or long intimacy, I cannot help entertaining no inconsiderable degree of regard; a pang will shoot across my breast! yet do not think, as Miss More says,

“ To 'scape the pain I would the joy forego,
 “ And miss the transport to avoid the woe.”

No, in one I behold only a transient mortification, in the other the foundation of every future blessing, which my indulgent stars permit me to expect.

But I have an unfinished task in the frame, which my governess is anxious for me to carry home completed; and as I shall have the pleasure of seeing you

you very soon, excuse this short letter,
and believe no less than if I wrote a
volume, that I am your very grateful and
affectionate

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER XVII.

 SELIMA.

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

YOUR tears, my dear Julia, at once flattered, afflicted and reproached me: flattered I must ever be by any demonstration of your regard, nor can I behold your concern without sharing its effects, though my own dry eyes, whilst yours were suffused with tenderness, indicated an apathy foreign to my heart---a heart, if you will believe me (though I hate professions) scarcely able to endure the sensations of the moment. But the big drops at length forced a passage, and would, I verily believe, soon have washed away

away the bitterness of woe, had not my wife companion judiciously exclaimed,

“ Why really, Miss, one would admire to see you take on in this fashion, on leaving school. I thought all young ladies loved liberty, 'specially such as you, who are coming to a fine place, and a kind friend like my lady: I am sure were she to hear of it, she would think you very ungrateful.”

This reproof (though natural enough I own) pierced me to the soul, and only served to renew the violence of those emotions, by which it had been occasioned: but pride restrained my vexation, and effectually sealed my lips; till the stopping of the carriage at the inn door at —— diverted my attention, and presented to my view two formidable figures equipped en militaire—nay, do not be alarmed; for your friend is as safe as if she had remained within the limits of Mrs. Frankley's jurisdiction. To be sure I trembled a little at a rencontre,

contre, which I had been so frequently admonished to avoid : and had I met a lion or a tyger by the way, I could not have deemed my destruction more inevitable : yet *entre nous*, when they scarcely took any notice of me at all, I felt a sort of disappointment, and was wonderfully surprized, to find it possible to meet men, and in red coats too, without being engaged in an adventure. I could not help taking out my tooth-pick-case to see if my riding-hat became me ; and observing that my bright eyes were somewhat tarnished by a remaining tinge of affliction, I very philosophically accounted for the phenomenon. One of the strange mortals, as we passed them at the inn-door after we had breakfasted, offered his hand to help me into the carriage ; but I, foolishly misconstruing an act of common civility into some mischievous design, rejected his assistance, and flew past him with such an unguarded precipitance, that I was in danger

ger of missing the step, and falling under the wheel: Mrs. Bolland said, they enjoyed a hearty laugh at my simplicity: for her part, she was not encumbered with such a weakness, and highly diverted herself at my expence: she loved to see a smart fellow in her heart, she said, and putting her head through the window to prolong her view of so favorite an object, saw them pick up something, which she was very certain must belong to me, they looked after the chaise so significantly: I searched my pockets over and over without discovering any deficiency in their contents: but, alas! the mystery was too soon unravelled: before we reached the end of our journey, I perceived that the dear locket which Mrs. Anne Aubrey gave me, requesting me earnestly to be careful of it for her sake (and you know how dearly it was prized) in the confusion in which I rendered myself so ridiculous, had

had dropped from the velvet ribbon, which fastened it on my neck.

You cannot conceive my distraction, I was half frantic, and it was with the utmost difficulty I refrained from tears, even in the arms of my beloved benefactress. Oh! if she should ever know how careless I have been of her favours! —I was determined to write cheerfully, Julia, as I know your spirits are not the best in the world, and that you have too many troubles of your own, without bearing a part in mine; but indeed I am very sad at heart—I feel as if I had committed a crime, which must one day or other call upon me the vengeance of ill-requited friendship. Tell me what you would do in such a case, and I will follow your advice. Mrs. Bolland has vowed repeatedly never to divulge the secret: but then—in short I will say no more about it, for the more I reflect, the more I am distressed. Write to me immediately—

mediately—a letter from my Julia cannot be void of consolation to her ever faithful friend,

SEIIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

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LETTER XVIII.

FROM THE SAME

TO

THE SAME.

STRONGLY impressed with the justice of your reasoning, yet in violation of my promise still persisting to act diametrically opposite to arguments which I cannot controvert, how am I to justify myself? How can I hope my gentle mistress will ever again exert her better judgment in my behalf? How can I form so presumptuous an expectation, but upon the strength of that partiality which I have often proved? Yes, my Julia, our hearts, I trust, will ever beat
in

in friendly unison ; the cement, which binds them to each other, is not of a nature to suffer from the casualties of opinion, caprice, or infirmities of temper, by which your affection has been often tried. You have loved me with all my unvarnished foibles open to your view ; and *Time* will not surely be so unmerciful as to multiply their number, or to increase their dominion ; frequently I believe, *it* will furnish deceit to conceal what it will not bestow virtue to erase : in that case it would be adding one article to my list of errors, which would in substance I trust outweigh the whole.

Your advice, immediately to mention the loss I have sustained, I blush to say, I have not the courage to pursue ; yet be assured, my cowardice shall not betray me into a dissimulation I despise ; I am not apprehensive of reproof, but I cannot bear the semblance of ingratitude, the reality of which, if I know myself, can never pervade my breast
but

but something will occur to introduce the subject, of which I will take care to avail myself, and till then shall think no more of the teasing incident, which came on purpose, I believe, to interrupt my felicity, which without it would have been too complete.

O, Julia, that you were as happy as I am! this place is all that the poets ever dreamt of—is it not? You may form some judgment of it, though you only saw it in the winter—Could Arcadia, Tempe's Vale, or any of the pretty haunts of sylvan deities, present more rural charms than those which surround this Temple of Beneficence? Yet I must confess, that, were not these verdant plains and shady groves often violated by the social step of rude mortality, a considerable chasm would still remain in the enjoyments of your Selima. Woods and purling streams are vastly pretty to talk *of*, but they are nothing to talk *to*; and what woman can

be happy, restrained from a due exercise of that talent in which we so eminently excel? Your humble servant, at least, will never aspire to the honourable title of a good woman at the expence of so painful a sacrifice; nor am I in danger of being compelled to practice a virtue so repugnant to my inclination. All here delight in conversation—think the *human face divine* the noblest ornament of nature, and that a group of happy figures is an embellishment even to the landscapes of a Claude.

In this beautiful retreat, the less refined, though more enlivening, pleasures of the beau monde are not entirely excluded; and music, dancing, *petits parties, tour a la champetre*, with reading, working, walking, feeding poultry, and nursing exotics, divide our time, and securely fortify it against the encroachments of that vile reptile, *ennui*, which the French only know how to express, and the poor English how to feel, which,

“ like

“ like a worm in the bud, preys on the damask cheek,” and is almost as fatal an enemy to the complexion, as grief itself.

Yesterday we had a concert in the wood, on the banks of the river A——, where we have oft together strayed—Dear, dear ! how I wish that “ the gods had made me poetical ! ” but as that is not the case, I can only pray in humble prose, again and again, and a thousand times again, to be indulged with the same gratification, and I am not totally devoid of hope that I shall be so ere long : the kind, the unceasing promoter of my pleasure has made an application to your father, which I trust he will not be able to resist. He surely will not be so perverse as to deny you an indulgence which cannot affect his own peace ; for in this retired situation, how can you possibly be more obnoxious to the jealousy of your pretty step-mother, than immured in a boarding-school in town,

or a nursery in the country? As for the interruption in your education, it cannot serve for a pretence, for if that is not perfectly completed, after ten years close attention to its different branches, I think I may venture to pronounce, it never will be so. No—I have carefully canvassed every caprice which might possibly form an obstacle to our success; and see not the slightest cause for apprehension. I shall therefore, before the expiration of another month, confidently expect to salute that dear friend who alone can share with the beloved inhabitants of this favoured mansion the affectionate heart of her faithful

SELIMA WORTHY.

Pray give my *maternal* regards to all my good children, and assure the ladies of my pious wishes for their amendment: nor neglect to keep alive the remembrance of me in the minds of all my late companions.

LETTER

LETTER XIX.

 FROM THE SAME

TO

THE SAME.

'TIS pitiful, 'tis wondrous pitiful—
 nay, it is ten times more, it is enough
 to drive a woman mad : Was there ever
 —but I must not rail. Your father has
 sent a positive refusal ; you are not to
 come to us, Julia—you are too young—
 it is a great disadvantage to girls to ap-
 pear too early in the world, and it is
 the anxious wish of his dear lady, kind
 creature ! as well as his own, that you
 should make your *entre* into public life
parfaitement accomplie ; which renders
 it indispensibly necessary that your stu-
 dies

dies be uninterrupted for two or three years longer.

What am I to do? Teach me to bear a disappointment like yourself; impart to me a portion of your fortitude: yet far be it from me to rob you of any of those supports, which I fear you will too often want.

You ask many more questions concerning our neighbours, than I am qualified to answer: I did not think the names of people, with whom you are not personally acquainted, could be productive of any entertainment, or, as far as I was able, I should have anticipated the request.

About a mile to the right reside Mr. and Mrs. Smith, a worthy and venerable pair, more eminent for their good deeds than any rank they hold in fortune's calendar, though the latter is the sister to the late, and aunt of the present, Sir Charles Stanley: their daughter, who appears to be about thirty years of age, inherits

inherits the virtues of her parents : I cannot say she is particularly endowed with personal charms, but that defect is in my opinion amply compensated by good sense, good humour, a sweet voice, and no small degree of excellence in my favourite art : she also informs me her brother, who is a physician at M——, is equally attached to the charms of music.

Not far from thence is a magnificent seat, belonging to an antient family of the name of Melford ; of which there now only remain a bachelor and two old maids ; the former I have not particularly remarked ; the latter seem to be good sort of people, but with dress and address formal, precise, and perfectly conformable to the common characteristics of the respectable sisterhood.

Three miles to the left is the superb mansion of Sir Richard Kitley, a Nimrod of the most extensive fame, to which every farmer around can bear a lamenta-

ble testimony. From day break till sun-set he scours the country with his redoubtable compeers; from sun-set till morning, he swears, roars forth the coarsest ribaldry, and at length drinks himself into a state of beastly insensibility: his hall is decorated with the trophies of his prowess; whilst his charming wife, a jewel deplorably misplaced, whose gentle virtues win the admiration of every heart but her husband's, is totally neglected for the more congenial society of his fellow brutes. What folly it is to marry! Heaven shield me from so imprudent an enterprize! Who, that beholds the rational enjoyments of the loved mistress of this calm abode, would madly barter so many uninterrupted comforts, for a certain and unlimited subjection to unknown caprice? Positively, Julia, it is my fixed determination to live single; and if you are as wise as I am, you will do the same.

The

The next upon my list is Courtley Manor—but the ladies call on me to attend them in a walk, and the letter-bag must be delivered before our return, so farewell, my dear girl.—We are not to expect the gratification of all our wishes, or I should not at this moment be compelled to sign myself, your disappointed friend,

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER XX.

FROM THE SAME

TO

THE SAME.

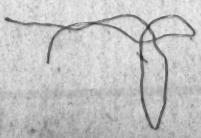
PSHAW!—love is the most ridiculous thing in nature—I did not think you so absurd—Poor Julia! you will soon become the victim of your own sophistry; the little tyrant plays off his most successful artillery against his best friends: for my part, I am vested in a coat of mail capable of turning the sharpest arrow in his quiver. The tender passion is very ornamental to a novel or a romance, and many a briny tear has trickled down my woe-distorted cheek, the
resistless

resistless tribute of a moving scene in a well-invented love-tale, but I will never be the heroine of one, I promise you.

My nurse is just come from B——, on purpose to see me: and it is sixty miles from hence at least. Is it not very affectionate of the good creature? She has brought her daughter with her too, which I am glad of; for I am sure I shall like her prodigiously, because she is all life and spirits.

Last night my dear Mamma (I cannot use a less tender epithet) gave a ball in celebration of my return from school, and all the neighbouring families were invited.

It is the general etiquette, I find, in private assemblies, to change partners after every second dance; and your humble servant, being the queen of the gála, was first honoured with the hand of the gay and fashionable Charles Courtley, who is literally a *sweet* creature, or the effluvia of eau de luce, eau de mille



fleure, poudre a la Marechalle, and pomade de bergamot, are lavished in vain : he is the very quintessence of bon ton ; his good-breeding signalizes itself in every gesture ; though it is of such a nature, that I protest, ignorant as I am of life, had he not been an inhabitant of Courtley Manor, and a Lord's son, I should have mistaken it for the very reverse.

Mortified to death with being shackled to so unworthy a partner, and overcome with *ennui*, which he was too polite either to conquer or disguise, he dawdled down the room, neither dancing nor walking ; but in a sort of shuffling step between both ; elegantly inattentive to all, but most particularly so to me ; to account for which I think it necessary to remind you, as an excuse for the gentleman, that the charms of your Selima were somewhat eclipsed at that time by the disadvantageous *naivete* of a first appearance—I shall do some execution
you

you will see—but as for such a heart as Courtley's, it is not worth the trouble of an attack.

From the petrifying insipidity of a school-girl, he was happily relieved by the graceful ease and unrestrained vivacity of a Court belle, now on a visit at the Manor.

Lady Belinda Lawrence is a finished coquette; and, if I have ingenuity enough to read a date in a countenance, where every art has been essayed to render it invisible, between thirty and forty years of age: under the enlivening influence of her superior graces, my poor, indolent Adonis became reanimated, displayed the excellence of *Le Vestris*, talked loud in half-sentences, and stared those out of countenance who were least accustomed to this species of politeness, to which class your simple friend had the misfortune to belong. In short, this noble pair were a most provoking check on the pleasure of
the

the evening. For my part, I think if high rank precludes the exercise of civility, it should be voted a general nuisance, confined to its own circle, and not suffered to interrupt the enjoyments of the more humble, and, if I may form a judgment by this specimen, the far more respectable, part of the community.

Mrs. Leslie says it is very unjust to establish an opinion of a multitude on the conduct of an individual; that good and evil are pretty equally distributed, and pervade indiscriminately the bosom of the beggar and the Prince.

The honour of my hand was next solicited by the amiable Dr. Smith, who is indeed of a different order of beings from its former possessor—much handsomer though in a plain coat, and infinitely more agreeable, though not sufficiently well-bred to be impertinent: when he was called on in his turn to resign a *prize* with which I assure you
he

he seemed perfectly contented (*you know I am not at all vain*) I grumbled in my heart at a point of ceremony which so soon deprived me of so entertaining a companion.

My next enslaver was the grave and formal Richard Melford, Esq. who very judiciously adapted his conversation to the temper of a girl of eighteen, by railing with furious, and, I hope, undeserved, acrimony against the follies of the present age, contemned dancing as an indelicate amusement, thought young people were too often in public, strongly recommended the example of his grandmother, many of whose wholesome maxims he kindly repeated for my edification, and hoped to see the odious allurements of the present fashion give place to the decent cap and coif of his revered progenitor. His step and attitude being as antique as his sentiments, and drawing upon him the eyes of the whole company, you may suppose I relinquished

linquished the superlative honour which he had conferred upon me without reluctance; though my *dernier resort* was a poor epitome of the affected airs of the honourable Charles Courtley, in whose family his father, by the services of his stewardship, has amassed a fortune, built a fine house by the park-gates, and imitates the elegancies of his patron.

Mrs. Aubrey and Mrs. Leslie sometimes joined in the dance, and seemed to enjoy the gaiety of the evening with a spirit, which even added to my own: we kept it up till two o'clock in the morning, and the whole concluded with Country Bumpkin and Sir Roger de Coverley.

The flame for giving balls, so agreeably enkindled at Heathcott, is likely to be kept alive, I think; for on the 20th, the same party is to meet at Courtley Manor, but I cannot say I look forward to that day with any extraordinary impatience;

patience ; but then in quick succession follows the less brilliant, though more social charms of Oatley farm ; where the captivating doctor, and his amiable sister, are presidents of the feast, can it fail of that refined conviviality which the combination of cheerfulness, sense and good humour, are best calculated to inspire ?

What a quantity of nothing am I imposing upon you ! but I will not add to my offence by apologies, which a pleasant and learned authoress has justly observed, are as impertinent at the conclusion of a tedious epistle, as curtsies on leaving a room when the visit has been too long already. So without more ceremony, believe me ever yours,

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER XXI.

MISS WESTBURNE

TO

SELIMA.

NEED I bid the sympathetic heart of Selima rejoice in the felicity of her friend? Ah, no! my own, with all the eager promptitude of confidential love, rises in my breast to reprimand the query.

The wished, but unexpected, day at length arrives. Suddenly emancipated from an imprisonment to which I saw no end—I tread on air.

By what propitious turn of fortune my release has been effected, I am entirely ignorant; but my good genius at last

last prevails, and I will not insult her kindness by inquisitively prying into the means she condescends to employ in my favour.

Even you, my friend, were never half so happy as I am—for to have known my pleasure you must have felt my pain; the pain, the anguish of being neglected—but it is over—I yet shall find a father. Now constantly present to his eye, and studiously assiduous to please, some natural spark of parental tenderness for me will surely revive, and I at last become a part of his divided cares. My step-mother, I am told, though young, beautiful and vain, is cheerful and good-humoured; and I cannot help cherishing a degree of hope, that by conforming entirely to her disposition, I may work a passage to her heart: I will indulge the weak, though innocent, love of admiration, which is the leading foible of her mind: that ingenuity, which obtained me the favour of my governess, shall be wholly devoted

devoted to her service : my time shall be employed in contriving becoming ornaments for her person ; and I will teach my own pride to content itself in the gratification of hers.

I received your charming letter, but cannot answer it at present. My hands, my head, and every faculty of my mind, are so engrossed, that could any thing on earth intercept so interesting an object from my thoughts, I should not at this moment remember even the sacred claim of friendship upon the faithful heart of your

JULIA WESTBURNE.

LETTER

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LETTER XXII.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

THE deuce take you, Selima, you have a second time sullied the brilliancy of my eyes, and destroyed their power; yet it was not your fault, I confess, that your letter, fraught with good tidings, transported me beyond my reason, that it arrived when I was arming for execution, and that my foolish eyes wept for the gladness of my heart—envious toads---I could have rubbed them out of the sockets. So you see I wholly acquit you of the intention, and will generously pardon you the deed, provided your acquisitions

quisions of felicity make no other encroachments on mine, provided that my weekly remittances are duly signed, sealed, and delivered, as usual, and that I perceive no diminution in your affection, or its testimonies.

You, perhaps, will term such an apprehension premature, and unworthy of the sincerity of your regard ; but I, who take a pride in treasuring the wholesome precepts of seniority, have been often told, that it is easier to prevent than remedy an evil, and am therefore only acting in conformity with the dictates of prudence and experience.

Your pretty Mamma, if her mind is as well decorated as her person, but two years older than yourself, will soon be sensible of the value of your society, the advantages will be mutual : poor Selima, who used to console your griefs, will now be regarded as an intruder on your joy, and shoved off to a corner of your heart, where she must be contented to remain,

remain, till, perhaps---nay, do not frown
 ---I will say no more---but I must tremble
 for the event. Yet seriously, my dear
 girl, I do rejoice, most feelingly rejoice,
 in the late accomplishment of your ar-
 dent wishes, and pray most fervently,
 that the fable tinges of the former part
 of your life may be totally done away
 by the brighter colours of the future.

The ball is over, and I will never
 more suffer my imagination to take the
 outline of a character from transient ob-
 servation: Charles Courtly is really a
 diverting creature; there is something
 so whimsical in his affectation, that it
 is more laughable than disgusting: his
 father is a very worthy, agreeable man,
 and her ladyship seems to be one of the
 best women in the world: but to return
 to the beaux, who you will allow are
 the summum bonum of an assembly.
 The bewitching doctor was not there,
 and the numberless *agremens* of his con-
 versation are not easily supplied, yet
 there

there were some new faces not amiss, and I began the evening with the nicest partner in the room, Orlando Courtley, a fine lively boy, about seventeen, sensible, artless, and engaging, though I own I was somewhat vexed when we were introduced to each other as proper partners ; but my chagrin soon wore away, and I objected strenuously to a change, which was to deprive me of my pretty little flirt : but the universal railery, excited by such a declaration of partiality, which was very inconsiderately made, overspread my face with blushes, and, to disarm the wit displayed at my expence, I was glad to give my hand to a gay lord, who is a visitor at the manor ; he expected excellent sport, no doubt, from the *mauvaise honte* of a baby, in which however he was disappointed, for I was too cross at that moment to be sheepish, but he understood the anatomy of the female heart, and administered the

the subtle dose of flattery so successfully, that I was soon restored to good humour.

Lord Hazleford is the brother of Lady Belinda Lawrence ; his person is tall and well formed, his countenance animated, and his figure graceful ; but when a depraved mind and dissolute manners are united to such outward accomplishments, every impulse of admiration is suppressed, and they only serve to render their attendant vices more deplorable :—at least such were my sentiments on finding that a married man had dared to insult me with the declaration of a pretended passion.

“ Married !” cried I, when his friend Courtley gave me the information—
“ impossible.” “ Impossible !” repeated he, “ why so, pray ?—is there any thing incredible in so common an event ?”

“ No ; but he does not seem grave enough for a married man.”

“ Ha, ha, ha ! that is very good, upon my soul—an admirable picture,

Egad—so when once the irrevocable vow has been pronounced, a poor devil is never to smile again, but his countenance must become a woeful index of the despair and repentance, which are the general concomitants of the holy state.”

“ Nay, I did not mean that he should look melancholy—I only thought”

“ Aye, now do tell me what you thought—I should like of all things to hear your definition of the duties of matrimony.”

“ That you never will, I assure you—it is a subject I do not understand.”

“ Why you perverse little mortal ! Who would think the spirit of contradiction could so soon establish itself in the female heart ! before you knew my gratification was concerned, you were giving your opinion without restraint, and now—but I will be even with you depend upon it, and shall interpret your sentiments as I please. In the first

first place you would say, I suppose, that a man ought not to make love to one woman, when he is married to another."

"I was not going to say so indeed," returned I.

"Perhaps not" said he, "for ladies do not always speak what they think."

"The ladies are vastly obliged to you upon my word."

"Then shall I presume that your disposition is of a more liberal cast, and that you would generously indulge the man honoured with your hand in the innocent liberties of flirtation."

"What a teasing mortal you are! but I will not say another word on so uninteresting a topic."

"You are a little hypocrite, I believe, but you shall answer me one question more, I am determined. Suppose a poor fellow shackled to a woman he hates, would you not excuse his trifling a little with the mistress of his heart?"

" Unless you could furnish me with an apology for what you deem his misfortune, I know not where to find one which can extenuate his fault."

" You read novels, I fear."

" Not often."

" From them you must certainly have imbibed these romantic notions of mutual love and everlasting constancy."

" An inference you will allow, highly commendatory of the study, I presume."

" No, quite the reverse, because they do not represent the world as it is."

" But as it ought to be, which I think is a much greater merit, unless it abounded in better characters to delineate."

" Then you will not admit of any excuse whatever for matrimony, without the concurrence of the heart!"

" None that I can form any idea of: but it is a subject to which I have not given any consideration."

" For

“For instance, what must a poor fellow do, if the women will not let him alone, and the dear enslaver of his affections is almost the only one inaccessible to his hopes?”

“That indeed is an extraordinary difficulty” said I, laughing; “and as the case must be unprecedented, I fear there is no remedy provided for the disease: pray, are you the person so singularly afflicted?”

“Ah!” said he, with a sigh, “you know not half—‘I could a tale unfold’—but it must be reserved for another opportunity. Heavens!” then exclaimed he, turning to lady Belinda, who sat on his right hand, and of whom he had taken very little notice for some time, whilst she was fanning herself violently, and exhibiting many marks of discomposure, “What is the matter, is your ladyship ill?”

“The heat,” replied she, “is so intolerable, there is no existing; you

must take me to the other end of the room, or I shall absolutely expire."

" You look so pale, you terrify me, shall I ring for some sal volatile, or had you not better retire?"

" Lard, no, I am not *ill*; I am only *dying* for want of air."

I was now left to the more edifying, perhaps, though less lively, conversation of Mrs. Margaret Melford, who sat on the other side; but this rational enjoyment was soon threatened with a most disagreeable interruption by the appearance of Lord Hazleford advancing from the other corner of the room, for whose character I had so lately conceived an insuperable contempt, and whose discrediting attention I was from that moment determined to avoid. The company of Orlando, therefore, who jumped opportunely into the vacant seat which his brother had left, was peculiarly agreeable at that instant, and

and when he exclaimed with an air of honest satisfaction,

“How glad I am that I have at last found an opportunity to sit by you!”

“Indeed,” said I, “then pray take care not to lose it again, by resigning your chair to any one;” “Why,” interrogated the arch rogue, “would you really rather talk to me than my brother or Lord Hazleford?”

His lordship joining us, saved me the task of a reply to so odd a question.

“Your humble servant, Sir,” said he—“Come, come, my young gentleman, I must take the liberty to change places with you; it is rather too soon for you to expect to monopolize the smiles of the ladies—you must not pretend to usurp the privileges of your elders.”

“Nor should you, my Lord, as a married man, encroach on the prerogatives of those who are single—my privileges may be somewhat antedated,

but yours, I think, are blotted out for ever."

I was quite delighted with the spirit of my little champion, and his opponent, equally sensible of the force of the retort, did not wish to provoke a second, he therefore contented himself with some insignificant chit-chat at the back of my chair, till Courtley, escaping from captivity, called him to attend his partner to her coach, and without any ceremony towards his younger brother, resumed his seat at my elbow.

"Where have you left Lady Belinda?" demanded I; "Dying, I suppose," he replied, "either with the heat of the room, or the mortification of being deserted."

"Upon my word" said I, "your humility and humanity are so equally balanced, I know not which deserves the highest encomium."

"To

"To tell you the truth" resumed he, "for I wish to have some serious conversation with you, I am afraid of carrying on the farce too far, and becoming the dupe of my own raillery. Lady Belinda Lawrence has been industriously thrown in my way as a bait to decoy me into the trap of matrimony, and I, with a view to my own revenge, have humoured the design: but why should I talk of a trivial, a transient evil, when I want to impart to you the true situation of my heart; and for the first time endeavour to paint an affliction which has lain deep in the very centre of my soul?"

"So deep," said I, "that it does not ruffle the surface in the least degree."

"No," returned he with a sigh, "my anguish is not of a nature to float upon the surface: indeed, my dear Miss Worthy, whether you will believe me or not,

G 5 "I have

" I have that within, which passeth shew,

" And scorns the trappings and the suits of woe,"
rejoined your humble servant, more
inclined to laugh at than to pity him,
I confess.

" Nay, if you laugh," said the poor
enamorado, " I have done, I will still
bury my grief in oblivion : I thought
I discovered in the little arguments,
which have passed between us, senti-
ments congenial with my own, tender-
ness to compassionate, and judgment to
direct."

" O ! if you are really serious, I
can be so too, but gravity sits so un-
naturally upon you, that you must ex-
cuse my mistaking it for a counterfeit."

He then informed me he was under
the dominion of an hopeless passion,
which he had struggled in vain to over-
come ; that his friends urged him to
marry on all sides, and that he had
sometimes, even himself, meditated
such a sacrifice ; but the women of
their

their choice had been so repugnant to *his*, together with the contrary bent of his inclinations, that he had hitherto been preserved from the most cursed state that man is heir to, to use his own expression.

“ And now, thank God,” said he, “ I am fortified against their machinations. Heavens bless your sweet voice ! it seemed to me the voice of inspiration, when you declared that the union of hearts alone”—

“ Is the object of your affections,” demanded I, “ unworthy of your regard ?”

“ Ah ! my friend ! you little think of whom you speak”.—

“ Is rank or fortune, then the obstacle to your wishes ?”

“ Would to God they were the only barriers to my happiness ! You shall allow me some merit, my dear Miss Worthy, when I whisper in your ear, under the closest seal of secrecy, that

the innocent and unconscious destroyer of my repose, is at this moment in the room."

"In the room!" reiterated I, with some surprize.

"Tell me," continued he, "what must a man do, who doats with an ungovernable distraction on the wife of another?"

"Labour most indefatigably to conquer so improper an attachment."

"Ah!" said he "you know not how I have struggled against the unhappy impulse of my heart."

"Fly then," cried I, "from an object so destructive to your peace, and dangerous to your principles."—At that moment the lovely Lady Kitely, who was my *Chaperonne*, tapped my shoulder, reminding me of the lateness of the hour. Courtley turned suddenly round, and all that was left unexplained of the state of his retrograde

grade affections, was strongly delineated on his countenance; but with admirable command over himself, for which I think him truly respectable, he resumed the general gaiety of his manner, led us chearfully to the coach, and took his leave.

This morning I received from him a copy of verses, in the cover of which were the following lines:

“ A word to the wife, you know, is enough, and I think the resolution I have formed to follow your advice, gives me some claim to that epithet; I have already paved the way for my departure; an intention so unexpectedly announced met many obstacles, but they are overcome. In a few weeks I hope to be more honourably engaged than in fighting for the wife of my neighbour, and that you, in the full possession of pleasure, peace, and comfort, will now and then exult in the
good

good work you have wrought in favour
of your ever-grateful friend,

CHARLES COURTLEY."

And now I am ready to beat myself
for taking up the character of a moni-
tress, and being so liberal of my ad-
vice. Should any accident happen to
him, I should consider myself as acces-
sary to the event; this it is to be wise
in one's own conceit; what shall I do?
nay I can do nothing, but trust that
Providence is too merciful to punish
my indiscretion. What business had I
to give advice? experience they say
teacheth, and I will take care so far to
profit by her instructions as never more
to be so lavish of a treasure I am my-
self so much in want of. Yet, indeed,
I pity the poor exile, independent of
the imprudent part I have taken in the
affair, and my compassion is the tribute
of his deserts; it is the common effu-
sion of humanity to wish happiness to
all,

all, but surely most to those who most
deserve it.

Adieu, my dear Julia, I shall ever
remain your faithful friend Selima,
though, indeed, I often feel ashamed
to add the name of

WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER XXIII.

MISS WESTBURNE

TO

SELIMA.

FEAR not the encroachments of felicity on my heart, did my misery alone form the cement of our friendship, I have but too much reason to believe it never would be dissolved. Lady Alicia Westburne is too much a votary to fashion to court the affections of a *child*, but you shall make your own comments on my situation.

To begin from that moment of exultation, which vanished as suddenly as it appeared; in my travelling companion, I found a vulgar French woman,

man, dirty, gaudy, and ignorant, hired, I conclude, without any attention to character or recommendation, for the governante of a girl of nineteen; this beginning of my history, you will say, presents no very flattering auspices of the future, yet still the cherub Hope kept her station in my breast, sustained my drooping spirits, and as whatever is least known appears most wonderful, so home was still the wished-for haven, where the weeds of discontent could never grow. But, alas! where were all the fairy forms of my imagination, when no gates flew open at my approach, no tender parent, in anxious expectation of his only child, caught me in his arms, but after alighting at the back entrance, Selima, how my heart bleeds at the recital, I was conducted to the nursery, where, indeed, all the implements of infancy were carefully placed in order against the return of their mistress.

trials.—Well, I wept not—I said nothing—and when dinner was served up, I even endeavoured to partake of it. But, during the melancholy repast, I heard a voice in the gallery, which I should not have known for my father's had it not been the tone of a master speaking to his servants.—How I trembled, and burst into tears on his entrance: Contending emotions performed what mere unmixed affliction had failed to accomplish—he seemed softened, yet I thought his welcome a cold one, and when he added to his salutation, a hope that I would be a good girl, and obey the commands of my governess, I know not how I tottered to my chair, I felt almost petrified, my eyes refused to yield another drop of consolation, and my heart grew dead within me, though I did stammer out something of a wish to make his will my rule of conduct.

“ That

"That is very prettily said," returned he, "but I cannot stay now, I expect company to dinner, and it is time to dress; to-morrow I will introduce you to my lady, but I doubt she will spoil you, Julia, she is the most indulgent creature in the world."

I bowed silently, and he retired.

In the evening the old housekeeper, who lived here in the life-time of my mother, and still happily retains her consequence in the family, came to pay her respects to the only relick of her regretted mistress, of whom she fancied she retraced a strong resemblance in the features of her daughter, and in this good woman only I hope to find a friend beneath my father's roof.

The next day, about noon, I was admitted into my lady's dressing-room, where she sat lolling, in an elegant dishabille, at breakfast, with a squirrel on her lap. and a monkey by her side.

—On my appearance she exclaimed,

"What

"What a monster!" surveying me, with her glass, from head to foot, then addressing herself to my father, said, "I am sure, Mr. Westburne, this great girl is older than you said she was."

This reception, ungracious as it was, grieved more than it surprized me, and I silently took the seat a footman reached for me.

"Indeed, my dear," was the reply to this interrogation, "I cannot exactly say whether she was thirteen or fourteen her last birth day."

"Thirteen or fourteen!" cried her ladyship, with no more than a natural astonishment I confess, "Sixteen or seventeen rather, I am persuaded.—Pray, Miss, what do you say upon the subject? what age may you suppose yourself to be?"

"I always understood that I was nineteen in August last," said I, with much confusion, being obliged to contradict my father's assertion.

"And

"And give me leave to ask you, Madam," cried he, darting at me a furious glance, "who has had the impertinence to inform you so? do I look like the father of a girl of nineteen?"

"For mercy's sake do not storm!—what pleasure can you possibly derive from harrassing my weak spirits, and disordering my nerves? I know, whoever is in fault, I am always the sufferer?" said her ladyship, in a languishing voice.

"Nay, my dear," said my father, "I would not distress you for the world, or the girl deserves to be punished for her assurance!"

"Pray, child," renewed Lady Alicia, affectedly, "have you done any work at school?"

"Yes, Madam, I have done several pieces of different kinds, and have just finished a work-bag, which I hope your ladyship will do me the honour to accept."

"Et

" *Et parlez vous François aussi, Mamselle ?*"

" *Oui, Madame.*"

" And pray what sort of a master did the people employ ? Nobody of any eminence I imagine."

" We were attended by Monsieur Du Foy."

" Indeed ! I was myself a pupil of Monsieur Du Foy's. And have you learnt to paint amongst the rest of your accomplishments."

" I have a few drawings in my *porte feuille* ; perhaps your ladyship would like to see some specimens of my performance." Here you know, Selima, was a touch on my weak side, but my vanity, as it deserved, soon met with a disappointment.

" No, no child, another time : I have a monstrous head-ach, and cannot be teased this morning : you may return to the nursery ; I will not detain you from your studies, besides I know
how

how cruel it is to make you sit in form so long."

Indeed, there was some cruelty in keeping me to witness a beautiful person, distorted by affectation; however, I am blessed with two charming specifics for the removal of chagrin, my harpsichord and my pencil; the former I found in good tune, but to my repeated mortification, *La Villaine peste ma Gouvernante* often calls me from this amusement, to renew the already much over-acted farce of French lessons, pleading an authority from which there is no appeal.

A dancing-master, too, I hear, is hired to attend me: I really shall go distracted if they persist in keeping me in leading-strings all my life. In the evening, as a gracious effort of condescension, I was called for, by way of a break, into the formidable *ennui* of a conjugal *tete-a-tete*: my lady was ouching the keys of her piano-forte,
in

in a yawning way, changing from tune to tune, before she had played more than a bar or two of any : at length, however, she was prevailed upon to favour us with an Italian air, but I cannot honestly give much praise to her execution, or her voice, though I think both suffered greatly by the affected manner which accompanied them.

I then received a command to exhibit my musical acquirements, which I obeyed without reluctance, selecting such pieces, you may be sure, as were best calculated to display them to advantage. When I was desired to sing, I need not inform you, " A rose from her bosom had strayed," was the object of my choice, nor will you wonder that I was so entirely engrossed by the soft notes of this favourite *Morceau*, that I did not observe the entrance of a stranger, till it was finished, and my ears were saluted by such a torrent of compliments, that I was quite confused,

fused, and, blushing, rose precipitately from the instrument, and retired to the further end of the room; but the gentleman followed me with his eyes, and such a profusion of encomiums, that, unaccustomed as I am to the voice of flattery, I am sure I looked as foolish as I felt.

My mother (it is certainly my duty to call her so) was then earnestly entreated to take the seat which I had quitted; but vain were all the solicitations of her adoring husband, which the gentleman, though faintly, united his influence to enforce. "I really cannot, I have a monstrous cold," she drawlingly pronounced, when addressing herself to the latter—but with more decisive peevishness to my poor father, her answer was, "I will not play Mr. Westburne—you know there is nothing I detest so much as being asked to do what I do not like."

On which the stranger (for I am yet unacquainted with his name) again addressed himself to me, and with a most provoking ardour, as I knew it would serve only to render me more obnoxious where I wished to be agreeable, pressed me to resume an employment by which I had already *captivated his soul*. The last words were conveyed in a half-whisper, though not so cautiously but they were overheard; for my lady, with more spleen than consideration, cried, “ O! pray, Ma’am, as the gentleman is *captivated*, it would be barbarous to refuse.” In so odd a situation I knew not what to do—I hesitated—stopt—looked first at one, and then at the other—but being almost forcibly led to my seat, I involuntarily sat down, and began to warble the first song I recollected, as well as my confusion would permit, though not in such a manner as to captivate the soul; yet
it

it failed to recover me the favour I had lost. I rose the instant it was ended; and on lifting up my eyes, they met such an ungracious frown from her ladyship, as I did not think could have usurped the native harmony of her features: again I retired persecuted with applauses as before, till my indulgent step-mother, with all the attention of maternal solicitude, biting her lips, and exhibiting a perfect emblem of chagrin, said to me,

“ Pray, Ma’am, if I may presume, is it not time for you to retire? I did not understand that it was Mr. Westburne’s wish that his daughter should so early in life commence the woman of the world.”

On which, without waiting a second dismissal similar to the first, I hastily withdrew, though my new advocate was equally prompt in pleading my cause; but I was soon out of the way of hearing his high-flown panegyrics:

would to heaven I might no longer be affected with their consequences! Is it not very hard that I must suffer for the follies of another, and that other a man I never saw before, or wish to see again? But enough of self for the present: I am not a little ashamed of the predilection—a whole sheet of paper dedicated to so insignificant an object proves against me. I can only say the weakness is not an uncommon one, and under the present circumstances is sure of your compassion, as well as of your excuse; yet in the midst of *my* afflictions I could not help smiling at *yours*; and may they ever be of such a kind as to excite my risibility! though I have some doubts about the situation of your heart. I almost think you are in love, Selima; yet I honestly confess my penetration has not yet enabled me to discover who is the happy object of your regard; my suspicions glance alternately at the “bewitching doctor,” the lively Courtley,

Courtley, and the artless Orlando.—Should it be the second, my laughter will be turned into a sincere concern, and the grief of my friend will be interwoven with my own :—but no more of this—my Selima was not born, I trust, to be the victim of a hopeless passion ! and yet from whence could arise that deep concern, where the noblest gratification must be the only natural result of your salutary advice. But I can say no more—Phœbus smiles upon me, enlivening a clear, frosty morning with his rays, and inviting me to taste the greatest pleasure I am permitted to enjoy, except this soothing intercourse with my only friend.

Farewel. Whilst you are happy, affliction cannot wholly engross the thoughts of your

JULIA WESTBURNE.

LETTER XXIV.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

I Pity you from the very centre of my heart; for what? for being young, beautiful, and accomplished. Where is the girl, who would not share all your sufferings to be compassionated for such remarkable misfortunes? but with a mind like the angel form it animates, vanity presents you no compensation for wounded sensibility.

O! that I could impart to you a spark or two of my fire; were I in your place, Julia—alas! what could I do?—Dear me, it is easy to exclaim—
but

but it is very plain that I must equally have submitted, though not so amiably as you have done.

I wish your little affected step-mother—yes, indeed, I have the malice to wish she might instantly become an ugly antiquated dowdy, if such a change in her person could work any useful transformation on the disposition of her mind—yet I should not rail—for I fear some of the malignant effects of her malady disturb my breast. Is it in nature, think you, to behold *an infant* making conquests in the nursery, whilst one is flying from ball to ball, dressing, dancing, and flirting, without captivating a soul, or ever listening to the insinuating voice of love; but when it is devoted to some rival fair one, without feeling a smart pinch or two from the finger of mortification? Were I not chagrined, I should exhibit another emblem of “patience smiling” at

envy, which is the saddest grief that ever wrung the heart of woman.

You fancy I am in love, I find; no, no, do not think me such a simpleton as to give my heart away, at least, till I have secured another in exchange. Poor Courtley is gone; Orlando popped out of the shrubbery as I was walking alone yesterday at the farther end of the plantation, and frightened me out of my wits.

“ Did I startle you ?” said he;

“ To be sure you did,” returned I, “ how could I think that you were concealed behind the bush ?”

“ Concealed !” repeated he, colouring, “ I was not concealed, indeed; but the foot-road from the manor led me to the little gate just by, and seeing you through the trees, I made all possible expedition to join you: I came to take leave of you,” added he, “ for to-morrow I go to Oxford.”

“ I am

“ I am sorry to hear that,” said I,
“ I fear you will find a college life but
a miserable substitute for the gaiety of
Courtley Manor.”

“ Do not mention it, for I do not
like to think of it, I would not leave
home at this time for the world, if I
could help it,” said he, with a sigh :
“ my father and mother are so melan-
choly, they cannot reconcile themselves
to the sudden departure of my brother
Charles ; but you have heard of his
extraordinary resolution before, I ima-
gine :”

And I, with a conscious glow upon
my cheek, hesitatingly replied, “ yes,
yes, I, I, did hear something of it, I
confess.”

“ Ah ! Miss Worthy !” shaking his
head significantly, “ I believe you did
indeed ; how is it possible you can be
so ill-natured !”

To which I was going to return an
answer expressive of my astonishment,

but at that instant we met the ladies, and I never attempted to resume the conversation; for, although I was concerned that such an idea should prevail, as it evidently indicated, yet I knew not how to erase the impression, without discovering a truth, which I was bound in honour to conceal: so of the two evils, wisely preferring the least, I shall let the matter rest, and think no more about it, unless I now and then exult in the credit of having a lover, whilst I in secret mourn the want of charms to procure me the reality.

Last week all the Courtley family dined here, except the poor exile, who hearing, I conclude, that Lady Kately would be of the party, heroically absented himself: his purposed expedition was not mentioned, a circumstance which surprized me at the time, and made me imagine he had given up the intention; but now I fear, by the conversation

versation of Orlando, it is sufficiently explained.

The ball at Oatley farm is postponed, on account of the doctor's engagements, so I have nothing more to offer for your entertainment, except the regular progression of serene delights, which marks this sweet domain. Long, my dearest Julia, may it continue unimpaired, as at the present hour: but my dear Mamma is not well, and though I trust in heaven, her indisposition is of a trifling nature, yet it has whispered to my mind a train of possibilities, and almost distracted me with reflections on the uncertainty of all sublunary enjoyments: but surely, surrounded with blessings as I am, the thought is impious, and should instantly be subdued. I struggle assiduously against this painful intruder, but my spirits are unaccountably depressed, for I thank God Mrs. Aubrey's illness is by no means alarming: a slight

cold, attended with a pain in her head, has incommoded her a day or two, but I trust that my felicity will soon be restored by the perfect re-establishment of her health. Adieu, my Julia, remember your

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER XXV.

MISS WESTBURNE

TO

SELIMA.

MORE adventures in a nursery! but before I honour them with my attention, I must tell you that my suspicions are confirmed, and what was before only a conjecture, is now become a certainty; in truth, Selima, you are in love: do you think I lack a sufficient degree of penetration to date the unaccountable depression of your spirits, from the critical moment of the departure of the poor exile, and the agreeable Orlando? but to which to ascribe the fatal wound is still a task I
am

am unable to perform. I am too well acquainted with the superiority of your understanding, to suppose a slight cold, or transient indisposition, to which human nature is hourly subject, could make so violent an impression on your mind, even in the person of one to whom you are so tenderly attached: yet I do not tax you with dissimulation or reserve; perhaps you were yourself ignorant of the true state of your affections, and what I can term no other than a filial concern, might appear a sufficient source of the melancholy you have experienced. But to release your patience from the tenter-hooks of curiosity, on which I guess, from the beginning of my letter, it has been cruelly impaled.

Taking my solitary ramble yesterday morning before breakfast (for Madame Bouvais is too fashionable to make her appearance earlier than ten o'clock) I turned into an alcove, which
fronts

fronts the east, to admire the glories of the rising Sun; for at this season *La Dame Aurore est une paresseuse*, as well as Bouvais, and was chanting forth a little sonnet of my own composition, in honour of the god of day, when I was interrupted by the entrance of I know not who, for I am yet ignorant of his name, and must refer you to the poor-captivated soul in my lady's drawing-room, for a description of the intruder; though I believe I then neglected to give you a sketch of his portrait: he is tall, has black eyes, black hair, good teeth, and—no—his complexion is rather dark; but upon the whole, he is tolerably handsome, and was violently enraptured with so fortunate a rencontre.

As for myself, I believe I looked neither vexed nor pleased, but as if I wished myself away. He earnestly pressed me to repeat those enchanting notes, which had so happily attracted him

him to that temple of harmony; I felt extremely foolish at being thus accidentally engaged in a *tete-a-tete* with a gentleman with whom I had so trifling an acquaintance, and began to feel myself as much a baby as Lady Alicia could herself desire, and should have been glad to have made my retreat, even into the nursery; however, thinking it would be rude to refuse, I sat down and complied with his request; when the song was ended, I expected to escape, but being again entreated to proceed, and impelled by the same consideration, I sang several other songs, English and Italian, in which he accompanied me in a masterly manner with his flute, which he said he had brought with him for the purpose of trying a remarkable echo in the wood.

Thus agreeably entertained, I began to recover some degree of composure, and finding the conversation of my companion perfectly unexceptionable,
and

and entirely free from that disgusting adulation which from our first interview I had reason to apprehend, I consented to prolong my walk, and shew him a part of the grounds to which he either was, or pretended to be, yet a stranger. At our parting, I must acknowledge that he pressed my hand, and, in a supplicating accent, asked, if he might not hope for a repetition of the supreme felicity he had enjoyed ? to which I indifferently replied, that my walks were uncertain, that they depended on the weather, and a variety of other circumstances ; dropped a curtsy, wished him a good morning, and tripped into the nursery ; where, from want of a proper reserve of temper, and being unconscious of any conduct it was necessary to conceal, I imprudently told the whole affair to my governess, who rallied me unmercifully on my sheepishness, *mauvaise honte*, vulgar timidity, and many other such terms of disapprobation,

probation, concluding with a gracious offer to quit her downy pillow an hour or two earlier than usual this morning, to attend me in a second meeting with the stranger, in which my appearance could not fail of being *comme il faudroit*, under the sanction of her presence and example. “A second, and a designed, meeting of the stranger!” exclaimed I with some warmth: “you mean to affront me, surely, by such a proposal!”

“Affront! ma foi! *voila la politesse*—indeed, Mademoiselle, you do know nothing at all of de matter, croyez moi—Do you imagine dat yee, dat de noblesse of France, be ashame to meet de chevalier alone? yee do know de world better den so; but dere be someting gros in de Angloise, dat never can be overcome.”

“On my part,” said I, “I fear you would find it a difficult task to effect so bright a reformation, and I am very
willing

willing to spare you the trouble of the effort."

"What, What! you would not rebel against my autoritè, I hope!—you will not have de confidence to disobey my command!"

"Indeed, Madame," said I, "I shall not scruple to take that liberty, whenever my own judgment leans to the other side of the argument."

"Vell! if ever I hear any ting so vicked! vera pretty, Miss, vera pretty; dis is like de obeifance you promise your pappà—but I shall make him acquainted vid your behaviour, never fear."

"Pray do, Madame," said I: "if he himself informs me that it is his pleasure that I should attend you, my objections will be removed."

So saying, I calmly unlocked my writing-box, the valued casket, which contained the letters of my dearest Selima, to whom I was about to

"Unlock the casket of the heart."

But

But here was not to be the end of my vexation : My provoked antagonist, perceiving I was no longer inclined to parley on the subject, flounced out of the room in a fury, leaving the door open, which occasioned such a circulation of air, that my paper was discomposed, and whilst I rose to shut it, my lady's monkey, which is frequently my guest, when she has other company, with all the malice and cunning incident to the species, jumped upon the table, snatched away part of the treasure which it held, was out of my reach and through the window in an instant ; and though I flew down stairs at the hazard of my neck, all the redress I could obtain, was the poor negative satisfaction of being assured that his teeth and ugly paws were too dextrously employed to leave an atom of his regretted prey, for the inspection of perhaps a more rapacious part of the fraternity ; but even this was only a transient

transient consolation; for recollecting the derangement of my writing-implements above, I returned with precipitation, and found Bouvais regaling her curiosity with what Pug had been in too great a hurry to secure: on my sudden appearance, a consciousness of guilt displayed itself in her countenance; yet when I demanded, with undisguised resentment, if the trust reposed in her authorized her to read my letters, she with wonderful effrontery replied:

“ Assurément, Ma'mselle—how can I possibly answer for the good morale of my pupil, unless I know de subject of her correspondence?”

And away she strutted with an affected air of dignity and importance, which diverted me in spite of my vexation.

Presently the monkey was inquired for: I was interrogated on the occasion, and fell under the weight of my lady's displeasure for leaving the window

dow open. No one could think of admitting air, she said, for their own gratification, in the month of November, therefore it must have been done with an evil design against her dear Marmoisette, because I knew it was a favorite of hers. Indeed I could scarcely refrain from returning a smile of contempt to so ridiculous an accusation; but reflecting that she was my father's wife, I checked my indignation, though I could not regain my lost tranquillity through the day, nor till the balsamic god had "weighed my eye-lids down, and steeped my senses in forgetfulness," could I compose my spirits, so as to give you an account of the curious adventures of the day; and when I rose with the lark this morning to execute the pleasing task, will you believe, that Bouvais was up before me, dressed, and sallied out as my *double*, I suppose, to meet the stranger: however, whether you have faith enough to credit

dit me or not, ' such things are,' and such things will be, I believe, as long as there is a French governess to superintend the morals of a girl of nineteen.

Believe me, with best respects to your good friends, and fervent wishes for Mrs. Anne's recovery, your ever-affectionate

JULIA WESTBURNE.

LETTER

LETTER XXVI.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

MINE was a prophetic sorrow. Mrs. Aubrey's illness was not of a slight or transient nature. O! my God! restore her to my ardent prayers. I cannot write—and when I may—fare you well, Julia—pray for your afflicted friend,

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER XXVII.

MRS. LESLIE

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

I FEAR, my dear Miss Westburne, the superscription of this letter in an unknown hand, will alarm you; but suspense is the most insupportable of all evils, and most happy am I in relieving you from it, that I can with truth assure you that your friend is better, acknowledging at the same time, that she has been extremely ill indeed; anguish of mind, and fatigue of body, in her unremitting attention to her benefactress, produced a nervous fever; but to the humane, I may say affectionate,

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tionate,

tionate, assiduity of Dr. Smith, under the gracious aid of a divine Providence, we owe the happy prospect of her recovery, which has this day dawned upon us.

You may better conceive than I describe my sensations under this complicated distress : as for Mrs. Aubrey, tho' much better—alas ! her feelings are not so acute as they have been, but heaven is all-sufficient ; we are the work of the Omnipotent. His will be done.

I cannot say any more at present, but you shall receive a farther account of our situation by the next post, if possible.

Indeed, my dear madam, I cannot find language to express in how great a degree you have a fellow-sufferer in your obedient, humble servant,

CAROLINE LESLIE.

LETTER

A letter from Miss Westburn, in answer, is omitted.

LETTER XXVIII.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

WITH much difficulty I have conquered. I have at last obtained permission to be propped up in bed, that I may with my own hand give you a certificate of my existence.

You have been upon the brink of losing a very sincere friend, Julia, I assure you; but the danger is over, they tell me; the supplications of the generous few, who kindly interest themselves for such an insignificant being as I am, have prevailed, and my recovery, I humbly thank the gracious

Author of divine mercies, is now as rapid as if it meant to overtake the affectionate wishes of my friends.

The illness of my dear Mamma, too, I am informed, is almost entirely removed; but alas! her disorder is of such a nature—but this is a forbidden subject—I must hope the best.

Be sure to give me an unabridged history of all your adventures; for I am now as able to laugh with you, weep for you, or feel for you, as ever.

But here comes the arbitrary doctor; he is worse than a step-mother—I must hide my pen and ink; quick, quick—only just let me say I am Julia's sincere friend,

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER XXIX.

MISS WESTBURNE

TO

SELIMA.

MOST welcome, my dear Selima; was the certificate of your returning health: the anguish of my mind, during your illness, I must leave to your friendship to imagine, for it is far beyond my abilities to describe its poignancy.

Thank Heaven! you now tell me every apprehension is over, yet suffer not too great a security to betray you into a remission of the precautions necessary to a state of convalescence; keep a due restriction on your spirits,

my dear girl, till time has renewed your strength, and yielded them an adequate support: let me, in the second place, heartily congratulate you on the happy recovery of your inestimable friend: your felicity hangs on hers, and hers on yours; long, long may they remain, thus sweetly blended, uninterrupted, unallayed; for sure no bliss can equal that which flows from tender instances of parental love: this you possess, Selima, in the most exquisite degree, at least the sacred essence, though the root is lost. Talk not of the obscurity of your birth; were you a Princess, could you be happier than you are? But your mind is too amiably composed, too well instructed, to repine at your ignorance of circumstances, which, whether good or bad, are by a gracious Providence, to serve its own all-wise, though inscrutable designs, veiled in darkness, or to undervalue the bounteous gifts of
its

its divine mercy, by which you have been so eminently and so miraculously distinguished.

Nothing extraordinary has happened here, except the departure of the family, and that is an event so immaterial in the calendar of my existence, that it is scarcely worth remarking. My father, my lady, the monkey, the lap-dog, the squirrel, &c. are all gone; but alas! like Sterne's starling in the cage, "I can't get out!" cries poor Julia: in the midst of peace and plenty she feels herself a prisoner, and sighs for the more dangerous, because more unlimited, haunts of social life.

Brighthelmstone is the present destination of our emigrants: the sea air is recommended to her ladyship, whose indisposition, I find, flatters my father with the hopes of an heir, and I most honestly assure you, cheers me with the future prospect of an innocent and affectionate companion; but the person

who favoured me with this intelligence, expected it to produce a very different effect on my spirits, and would not have shocked my ears with so sad a tale, were it not from the benevolent intention of stimulating me to an early consideration of my own interest, and inducing me to make a good bargain for myself, before the value of theewel is diminished. Her rapturous exclamations in praise of *de bon mien*, and noble sentiments of the charming Montgomery, since her morning's conference with him in the shrubbery, are laughable to a degree beyond description; and as French curiosity seldom suffers itself to be long tortured on the wheel of suspense, Madame soon developed the secret of his family, birth, and circumstances: he is the son of a Scotch nobleman, she informs me, which, to so sanguine an imagination, is in itself an ample indemnity for every

every perfection necessary to constitute and complete the happiness of human life.

I cannot say that I am endued with vanity or credulity enough to believe all she says, or I should be persuaded to believe myself a goddess, and that I had made a conquest of Apollo: in short, this demi-god has found the means to turn the heart of my governess; but alas! with all his god-like attributes, he will never obtain half the dominion over mine; nor indeed can I imagine he had ever any other designs against it, than such as would merely promote his own amusement; however, my thanks are his due for the wonderful metamorphosis which his conversation has effected in my favour. My beloved Bouvais is absolutely grown agreeable; we all love flattery, you know: at least I think you will acknowledge, it is an excellent substitute for impertinence and re-

proof; my life is therefore now become one calm scene of neither pain nor pleasure; my time glides on as smoothly as the silver stream unruffled by the Summer's breeze; but then, Selima, I belong to nobody, nobody cares for me; I am a burthen on my only parent; the very sight of me is painful to his eyes: these are reflections which will intrude. Could I forget the claims of nature, where would be the source of my complaint?

Adieu, it is time for me to conclude. May Heaven continue to you the affection of your friends, and graciously add their happiness to your own, is the sincere and fervent prayer of your ever devoted,

JULIA WESTBURNE.

LETTER

LETTER XXX.

MRS. WOODLEY

TO

MRS. GOWARTH, HEATHCOTT.

My honoured Madam,

I ARRIVED here yesterday according to your good sister's kind invitation, and in tolerable health and spirits, blessed be the Lord, considering every thing—dear heart; but God's will be done: I have had my trials, but we must all submit, as I say. I did not sit many minutes in the house, you may be sure, before I bethought me of your commands. Alack-a-day, how the dear lady is altered! she is a

perfect skeleton ; I doubt she has been in sad hands : why, that child she took out of the village, is grown quite a fine lady, I assure you ; but do you know, this poor deluded creature has had an apoplectic fit lately ; but that was not for me to know ; no, no, that was a slip of the tongue, you may depend on it. Well, if I was a rich lady, I should be so afraid of myself—the world is so mercenary, there is no knowing whom to trust ; the girl does, but look pale and sickly, and the good soul thinks it is all with fretting about her. Dear, dear, how easy it is to deceive such an unsuspecting creature ! but never fear, I will take care no more mischief shall go forward, now I am come amongst them ; no, no, they have basked in the sun-shine long enough ; but how are you going on yourself all this time, my ever honoured Madam ; still confined to a sick room ? when will your sufferings have

an end? but you are so amiable, so patient! you will be rewarded for all some time. The will is made you say, and as it ought to be—well, well, then, what have you to fear? there is no altering it without your knowledge: take care to be always with him though; your assiduity will be attributed to your affection. I hope my young master was well when you heard from him: Heaven bless his sweet face! his happiness and your own (and indeed I ought not to forget the good lady I am with) engage every wish on this side the grave, of the grateful heart of your ever dutiful,

REBECCA WOODLEY.

— LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

SELIMA.

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

I AM getting better daily, indeed, my friend, though were I so happy as to observe a more rapid progress in the recovery of my dear Mamma, the re-establishment of my own health would be much accelerated, I believe.

Poor Mrs. Leslie is almost overcome by her attention to us both, but fortunately the arrival of Mrs. Woodley, whom I believe you once saw here in the holidays, has, for the last few days, in some degree, divided the fatigue, and withdrawn the burthen from
one,

one, whose delicate frame, already cruelly harrassed by adversity, is very unequal to the weight, but whose mind shrinks at nothing that can give comfort to her friends; for my own part, I thank Heaven, I want no more assistance; but alas! I am still too weak to offer any; a reflection which wounds me deeply, and I fear, retards the accomplishment of my wish. It is grievous, Julia, to owe so much, and return so little.

What a dreadful retrospection have I to go through, yet it hangs upon my mind, and perhaps a revival of the melancholy circumstances of the past, may, by comparison, lighten those of the present.

The illness of my benefactress, as I believe I before informed you, began only with the appearance of a slight cold: her head was principally affected, but no uncommon symptom being observable, Mrs. Leslie was not alarmed;

no application was made to any of the faculty, and before the day appointed for the ball at Mr. Smith's, she was so apparently recovered, that I fulfilled my engagement without hesitation, and as if I were designed to feel the most exquisite poignancy of the reverse, my spirits were on that fatal day exhilarated above their usual altitude.

In the course of the evening, I was again honoured with the hand of the grave Mr. Melford: his behaviour was more ridiculous than before, and to render it most superlatively so, it was tinged by an odd, disgusting particularity towards myself: but I was dancing with the agreeable doctor, and very freely diverting myself with the laughable singularities of my former partner, when the soul-rending news arrived that Mrs. Ann Aubrey was expiring: what an end to our festivity! When I recall to mind that terrifying moment, the tremors which seized me
then.

then again recur : I will therefore pass it briefly over ; suffice it only to say, that through the timely aid of the skilful Doctor Smith, that life, on which alone every comfort of your friend depends, was happily preserved from an immediate dissolution, and I trust, with the blessing of Providence on his endeavours, will soon be restored to an unimpaired exercise of all its functions.

I have a great deal to say to you, Julia, in reply to your entertaining epistles, touching the garden scene, &c. but I have not spirits at present for so gay a topic ; besides, I have already exceeded the time allowed me. You will think I grow more stupid as I grow better, but indeed I believe I was almost in a state of intoxication when I wrote last : were I to tell you what a tippler I have been, I do not know whether you would acknowledge me for your friend.

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

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SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER XXXII.

MISS WESTBURNE

TO

SELIMA.

I REMEMBER the Mrs. Woodley you speak of perfectly, for whom I conceived a most invincible dislike in my last visit to Heathcott; she may be a good sort of a body as a nurse, but I fear she will not increase the social harmony of your fire-side, when sickness and her ghastly brood have finally absconded; a period which, I sincerely hope, is on the eve of its arrival.

If my observations on the character of Mrs. Woodley are just, she is too much the obsequious friend of the present

sent

sent company to be really interested in behalf of any one but herself; and I have often wondered that the rational spirit of Mrs. Anne Aubrey could ever brook the servile adulation of such an illiterate sycophant; but human nature cannot be without error; every character must have its shade as well as light, or it would be too dazzling for the weak eyes of mortality.

It was with infinite pain, Selima, that I remarked, from the style of your last letter, that my former remonstrances were not only unnecessary, but that I must now reverse the order of my intreaties, and exhort you to muster up your spirits as auxiliaries to that strength which I before apprehended they would impair. I hope you take advantage of the mildness of the present season; secure to yourself the salutary effects of air and exercise, whilst the serenity of the atmosphere will still permit you to enjoy them; do not neglect

neglect to amuse your mind; suffer it not to dwell on melancholy retrospections, or to create imaginary evils, a propensity to which debilitated nerves, I believe, are but too subject, and which I fear, Selima, another enemy of your peace will too much encourage you to indulge.

Nothing worthy of observation has happened since I wrote last, in the little circle of my perambulations, tho' my liberty is somewhat enlarged, and my walks, now and then, extended beyond the boundary of the park pale.

I cannot accuse you of idleness, Selima, yet I am anxious for more frequent accounts of the state of your own health, and that of your amiable friend, in which, indeed, I am most feelingly interested, though fearful of touching too weightily on a string which I am sensible excites the most painful emotions in your breast.

Believe

(189)

Believe me ever, with the most fervent affection, your sincere friend,

JULIA WESTBURN.

LETTER

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LETTER XXXIII.

RICHARD BECKWITH, ESQ.

TO

MRS. LESLIE.

AFFLICTION humanizes the heart, adversity alone can introduce the sentiments of benevolence to an avaricious mind. I have preserved my wealth; but I have lost those dearer treasures which constituted its value; and what does it avail? Poor is the rich man without a friend. I feel now the inefficacy of gold to purchase happiness: the instrument of pride, luxury, and injustice, can never smooth a wrinkle in the bed of pain. Had I made a worthier use of my possessions, had I employed

employed them in the purposes of humanity, I now should have enjoyed the recompence of an approving conscience: had I administered relief to your distresses, the nourished tenderness of sisterly affection would still survive, and lull my sorrows with the soothing voice of pity. Believe me, Caroline (for it must gratify your resentment) I now want your friendship more than ever you did mine: our poor departed sister too! I knew not of her death till remorse had stung my soul, and I had advanced thus far on my road towards the relief of her necessities. I have not courage to enquire into the nature of them—my imagination, too late awakened by my own sufferings, describes her to me in all the dreadful images of misery and want: spare me the recital; I feel it all, and now lament with sincere, though useless bitterness, the consequences of my neglect. Every atonement which still remains

remains within my power, I shall seize, like a drowning man, to save me from the vengeance of offended Heaven.

You are from this moment independent; a large fortune is at your command, which will soon be disburthened of the weight of me and my unworthiness. I do not ask to see you; little do I deserve, and still less am I able to support the emotions of, such an interview.

You know not how thankful I am, that your good fortune placed you in better hands than mine, that esteem and compassion worked for you in the minds of strangers, what duty, being coupled with avarice, had not the influence to effect on me.

I cannot relate to you the scenes of death and sickness, which have wrought this metamorphosis on my mind. A death-bed is an unflattering monitor, it speaks the truth, and its repeated warnings can certainly never fail to bring

bring the most hardened sinner to repentance.

If you write I shall receive your letter with gratitude—if you do not, I shall be sensible of the justice of your silence, and shall remain equally, and with the truest penitence, your devoted friend, and affectionate brother,

RICHARD BECKWITH.

LETTER XXXIV.

MRS. LESLIE

TO

RICHARD BECKWITH, ESQ.

My dear brother,

I Have received from your affectionate letter the most soothing gratification that this world can impart :—think not that I would be such an enemy to my own happiness as to sully the present colour of it by any ungrateful retrospections, or that my disposition is so inhumanly composed as to rejoice in your misfortunes, though most devoutly thankful for the transformation which has been effected in your heart.

Believe

Believe me, the tenderness of sisterly affection is far from being extinguished, though I confess it has lain dormant, and unexercised, but now called forth by reciprocal sentiments awakened in your breast, it revives with redoubled fervour.

Our poor Anna, alas! is deprived of the participation of a brother's love, but she is I trust in possession of higher joys than the unenlightened understanding of mortality can describe. Do not continue to oppress your too-greatly wounded mind by annexing horrors far beyond the real consequences of her estrangement from the world: for tho' I am sorry to say, what took its rise from vexation and disappointment was continued for some time under the rigorous hand of necessity; yet during the latter part of her life a misanthropic contempt for society, common to those who are entirely secluded from its enjoyments, obtained so absolute a domi-

nion over her temper, that with a resolute perseverance she resisted, not only the opportunity, but the warmest solicitations, to recede in ever so trifling a degree from the almost monastic austerity of her retirement: do not encourage so dreadful a supposition as that her dissolution was hastened by poverty or distress; on the contrary a putrid fever, caught in the humane performances of some charitable offices for a sick neighbour, deprived this life of one, whom it scarcely reckoned in its calendar, and laid to rest a soul, which, whilst it contemned the world collectively, was formed to share the sufferings of every individual.

You do not wish to see me—O my brother, recal a sentence so inimical to that satisfaction which this return of fraternal affection has excited in my breast.

The illness of my revered friend, whose compassion and liberality through
all

all my sufferings mitigated their force, now confines me to her side, from whence no consideration should induce me to be absent; but when that afflicting obstacle is removed, a period to which we look forward under many flattering auspices, I trust you will not refuse to embrace a long-alienated sister.

I ought, and do, most gratefully thank you for that part of your letter wherein you generously mention pecuniary concerns, with respect to which I at present have no necessities: through the munificence of Mrs. Aubrey I possess a noble provision: she, who always relieved my wants, has now entirely done away their existence—for my own part *my* pride is so far subdued, that it is without the smallest compunction, that I receive the benefactions of the woman I esteem, and whose fortune I am sensible is even adequate to her benevolence. How *yours* may be affected by the same circumstance I am

ignorant ; but this subject a future day will serve us better to discuss.

I flatter myself that my friend's health is in such a state of amendment, that much time will not elapse before I shall be enabled to appoint our wish'd-for meeting. In the interim, pray continue to write, that I may not sink into the painful apprehension, that my happiness was a dream, and that I may possibly awaken to the unpleasing certainty of being once more your neglected sister,

CAROLINE LESLIE.

LETTER

LETTER XXXV.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

YOU unmerciful little chit! how dare you satirize our visitor, who, I will venture to pronounce, in defiance of your rhetoric, is a good sort of woman; and I hope you will acknowledge, in that descriptive epithet is comprized all that it is necessary to say in her defence; though I must seriously reprove you, Julia, for the implication with which you conclude her character. Mrs. Anne Aubrey, give me leave to tell you, seeks not her own gratification alone in the acts of her beneficence; it is in the happiness

happiness of others that she looks for a reward: she has too enlarged a soul, too unbounded a liberality, to confine her benefactions to such only as can return an equivalent for every benefit they receive: the servility and adulation you have remarked, though I believe they are the common testimonies of gratitude from an uninformed mind, are far from being agreeable to her; but surely, suffering with the sweetest complacency, some unpleasant consequences of her liberality is no diminution of her merit.

I scarcely need say, that my spirits are no longer in that state of depression which you have so tenderly lamented, when I inform you, that Mrs. Aubrey's recovery is advancing as uninterruptedly as my own.

You see how I disregard your tutelary deity. When nothing but love affects my peace, I can trifle as before, and let my pen out-run my wit, as usual: the
idea

idea was a lucky one, however, as it diverted me in my illness, and being an inhabitant of your head, instead of my heart, conjured up a ghastly smile on my saffron-coloured cheek, and now and then beguiled me of a melancholy thought.

I suppose you think vivacity is a sanction for deceit, and that a falsehood in jest may escape the opprobrium of a lie. If it is on such grounds that you have hitherto discredited my assertions, I must change the form of my defence; therefore, with all the gravity I can command, I now seriously assure you, that I am not in love; on the contrary, were I unfortunately, by any superior power, compelled to enter into the solemn engagement of matrimony, with any man I am yet unacquainted with, instead of being one of the most enviable, I should be, without exception, the most miserable of my sex: yet I cannot honestly affirm, that my peace has been altogether

gether undisturbed by the arrows of the blind urchin, who has most treacherously found means to make me the innocent instrument of his cruelty, and has inhumanly implanted a thorn in the breast of a worthy man, which it is not in my power to eradicate. Poor doctor ! he has been the first under Heaven in the preservation of my life, and God forbid that I should destroy the tranquillity of his : yet I cannot be deceived ; I have not sufficient vanity, I trust, to dub myself the object of an imaginary passion : Mrs. Leslie too has made the same observation, and we have been closeted on the subject ; our sentiments were different in some respects ; she has a very exalted opinion of Dr. Smith ; so have I, when I do not regard him in the light of a suitor ; but then, O Lord ! I am literally sick of love.

Mrs. Leslie says, that if I will not marry him, I should tell him so without delay, for so many circumstances occur,

occur, as we are at present situated, for the encouragement of his hopes, that every moment which continues his suspense, will serve to aggravate the pain of his disappointment.

“So I would,” said my ladyship in reply, “but how am I to answer a question before it has ever been proposed to me?”

“By not using, as you have done, every manner of artifice to evade the subject;” and then! would you believe it? she accused me of being a little flirt, and fostering the mischief I pretended to deplore.

Now, by the bye, Julia, the good lady has once in her life fallen into an egregious error, for upon my word and honour, not a syllable ever passed my lips in addressing myself to the doctor, that might not have occurred in a conversation with herself, with you, or my dear Mamma. So I told her, indeed; but she, with the keen edge of raillery, cut

cut off the head of my argument, with the help of the old-fashioned remark, that friendship with woman is sister to love—how provoking!—I wonder her superior understanding should suffer her to propagate a text which is merely a type of the vanity of mankind.

“ Must I then,” demanded I, “ who never intend to marry, be totally excluded the liberty of chatting familiarly with an agreeable man?”

“ Never intend to marry, indeed!” said she, with one of her own smiles.

“ What will you give me, my good Selima, when you break that formidable resolution?”

“ Every thing I may happen to be worth,” replied I, freely, “ at the moment of my indiscretion.”

“ And I take you at your word,” said she, “ for then we may conclude at least, your lover will not be a mercenary one, or he would not make so unprofitable a bargain.”

She

She is a charming woman though she often affects to disbelieve my assertions, and then I am very angry at her incredulity to be sure, but a quarrel very seldom ensues : her happiness has lately received an acquisition in which I cannot fail to sympathize, though I apprehend it may produce some dilapidations on my own. That brother, to whose self-interested schemes she owed the unkindness of her father, and every subsequent misfortune, is at length humbled to a sense of his own demerits ; and his amiable sister, with every spark of resentment extinguished in her breast, rejoices in the reconciliation, waiting only the perfect re-establishment of the health of her most tenderly beloved friend, to confirm the reunion by her presence. I flatter myself, however, from her invariable attachment to its mistress, though her time must necessarily be divided, that she will always consider Heath-cott as her settled residence, notwithstanding which,

L

you

you cannot imagine how melancholy I feel on the idea of her departure.

So your knight-errant is departed in search of new adventures, but never fear, you are the *dulcinea* to whom all his great exploits will be dedicated: he has bought over the Governor of the Castle, and will return laden with laurels, to release his Princess from captivity.

I am not quite so prompt in discovering the ravages of the little God, as a certain friend of mine. Poor Knight! I do not perceive, that you are affected with a reciprocal flame: I see none of *Rosalind's* symptoms upon you: though I cannot say I entirely yield to the pretended art-magic of that discerning lady: For my own part I should expect the power of my charms to be very differently denoted, and my dear doctor presents an admirable example in support of the more rational sentiments of his mistress; for instead of being careless and
unconcerned

unconcerned on a point so materially commendatory to all the world, and to our sex in particular, he is of late become studious, even to a degree uncommon to himself, in the economy of his dress; yet do not imagine the gentleman is degenerated into the fribble—whether “*point device*” or *degagee*, his figure still retains its elegance, and as his graceful person derives many advantages from the noble mind by which it is animated; so does his form give dignity to his dress:—such is the portrait of Dr. Smith, from the just, unflattering pencil of a friend—but I must check the effusions of esteem, or I shall wear your patience to rags—mercy on me! my watch tells me it is three o’clock:—here have I sacrificed a whole rainy morning to your edification and amusement. Do, my dear girl, endeavour to extract some benefit from this learned epistle, by way of apology for your idle, but very sincere, friend,

LETTER XXXVI.

MISS WESTBURNE

TO

SELIMA.

YES Selima, I shall benefit by your epistle—it has made me sensible of an error of which I was utterly unconscious, and I flatter myself the contrition I have felt in consequence of it, will be found sufficient to expiate the offence. Most sincerely do I venerate the character of Mrs. Anne Aubrey, and believe that she is arrived as nearly to the unattainable criterion of perfection, as human nature will permit: but ere this I trust your resentment is extinguished, and believe me mine can never be enkindled against the sister of my heart.

To

To establish the credit of your prophetic genius, the knight-errant is returned already, and I am beyond measure perplexed by his assiduity : I know not what to think, what to say, or how to act on the occasion.

If his sincerity is equal to his professions, my pity he may command, but love is not to be ruled by compassion. I might indeed have suspected a plot, from the extraordinary importance and bustle which marked every movement of Bouvais: several days had proved unfavourable for my usual ramble; the atmosphere was still unsettled; she was wonderfully apprehensive for my health; confinement was its bane, if I regarded a passing cloud in a season and climate so variable as this, I might lose every opportunity of taking the air:—in short, she hurried me away much against my will, as I was busily engaged in a piece of work, which I have been very eager to complete, as a little *souvenir d'ametie*

for my Selima. She, however, kindly more attentive to my welfare than her own, declined partaking of the advantage she recommended, and as the resignation was not attended with much regret on my part, I submitted to take the promenade alone, and out I fauntered, *singing* “ as I went for want of thought,” till I reached my favourite grove, in which I had not strolled far, before I beheld Mr. Montgomery at my feet, pouring forth the anguish of his love-sick soul. It is a sad thing, if all he says be true: he vows he loved the first moment he beheld me—surely the passion cannot be so suddenly fatal.

Though amazed and confounded, I was not utterly deprived of an immediate sense of the impropriety of such a meeting, and in the hurry of my surprise I exclaimed, “ Bless me! how came you here?”

“ Do not, my sweet Julia, too hastily condemn the rash effects of a passion”—

“ Excuse

“Excuse me Sir,” interrupted I, endeavouring to withdraw my hand, which he seized—he would not suffer me to proceed.

“No, cruel arbiters of my fate,” said he, “you shall not leave me till, by a faithful avowal of my pain, I have obtained your pity, if you withhold your love.”

“It is a theme, Sir, with which I am entirely unacquainted. As for any injury you impute to me, I trust it will prove as transitory on your part, as it has been unintentional on mine: I must insist, Sir,” added I, with some stateliness, “on being at liberty to return; you cannot be insensible, that it is as contrary to my duty to receive visits from a gentleman in the absence of my father, as forming an intimacy with a stranger is inconsistent.”——

“I am no stranger” said he, with pride kindling in his eyes, “to your friends, Miss Westburne, and give me
leave

leave to assure you, that it is not my character, my family or my fortune, by which I am reduced to a clandestine disclosure of a passion, which it would be my glory to declare; but the peculiar cruelty of your situation, and the jealousy of your step-mother"—

"Sir" returned I hastily to this insinuation, "an aspersion on a part of my family is a very extraordinary testimony of your attachment to myself."

His reply I did not hear; for at that moment the rain, which was not before observed, penetrated the thick branches of the wood; the hail beat, the wind roared, the thunder reverberated in the air, and the lightning, doubly terrific from its unseasonable approach, flashed from tree to tree: instantly overwhelmed with those natural terrors, for which I have been often chidden and ridiculed in vain, I thought, but of the storm, and, impelled by the violence of my fright, ran about, I knew not where. My companion

panion wished me to remain under the shelter of the trees, but I paid little attention to his remonstrances; and at the end of the wood, being met by a sudden blaze of elemental fire—though happily unhurt—I fell almost lifeless at his feet, overcome by the force of apprehension. He seemed to be greatly alarmed at my agitation, and, instigated by humanity, however he might be affected by a more partial impulse, stripped his coat from his shoulders, and, wrapping it on mine, instantly conveyed me to a neighbouring temple, where, in a dripping state, we waited the conclusion of the storm, which yet continued with unceasing violence, he talking of love and I of terror, till, O! merciful Heaven! I shudder at the recollection, the tempest seemed to burst in a violent explosion over our heads. But how ought we to adore the protecting hand of Providence! its whole force has since appeared to have been expended on the grove. Even
in

in that very part of it which we had lately quitted, where several large oaks were shivered to the root. A death-like stillness succeeded, I saw the danger was over, but the effects of fear do not always subside with a removal of the cause: my whole frame was affected with the distress of my mind. Mr. Montgomery endeavoured to console me with tenderness and good sense: yet I own, though the confession may be somewhat sullied by a tinge of ingratitude, that I found a much more successful restorative in a plentiful shower of tears, which came seasonably to my relief, than in his rhetoric.

But to keep you no longer in the storm, my fears at length silenced the importunities of my lover, and as soon as the rain was abated, he consented, not reluctantly, I imagine, to escort me home, in seemingly humble resignation to his fate. On our way thither we were encountered by the gardener, who had

had been seeking me from place to place, by the orders of my considerate *gouvernante*, encumbered with my cloggs, *parapluie* and great coat: and without reflection, I blush to say, I took a hasty leave of my half-drowned knight, inhumanly neglectingly to offer him the advantage of a good fire side, to dry his clothes, and secure him from the probable ill consequences of his civility. When it was too late, you may conceive how severely I reproached myself for an inattention which no circumstances could excuse, though, at the same time I must acknowledge, it preserved me from a dilemma from which I should not have known how to extricate myself.

Madame met me on the stairs.

“ *Ha que je suis rejointis !*—I am so glad to see you, how I was terrified !”

“ If you will help me to some dry clothes, Madame, I shall be obliged to you,” said I coolly.

Though

Though not much pleased with the indifference of my reply, she condescended to grant my request, and I was soon disrobed of the uncomfortable vestiges of the hurricane, and my mind restored to its wonted ease: except the tormenting conviction of having militated against the common laws of gratitude and hospitality, in the ill effects of which I should most grievously have shared: for had my swain been carried off by a cough and hoarseness, before my eyes had completed their execution, or were he to die of a pain in the right side instead of the left, what a blow would my vanity sustain! I may rally now with impunity, as all these vulgar apprehensions are over, the poor man having happily found a better friend in the servants-hall, than his divine mistress in the nursery, though his heart, for the credit of my charms, still remains in the same lamentable condition, as you will perceive by a pathetic *billet-doux* presented

sented to me this evening, as I was seated at the harpsichord, warbling an old song, which I found in a music-book of my poor deceased mother's :

“ If 'tis joy to wound a lover,

“ How much more to give him ease,

“ When his passion we discover !

“ O ! how pleasing 'tis to please !”

Could any thing have been more apropos ? it was impossible, with a heart so harmonized as mine, to reject the letter, or to receive it with a frown ; no, Selima, you may think me imprudent, but I really took it, and actually perused the contents, with no small degree of complacency ; yet all this did not proceed from love, believe me, but, as I said before, or something very like it, the internal harmony of the moment prevailed, good humour predominated, and produced an effect, for which all the tender dialect of Cupid might have been exhausted in vain : it made me *deliberate*. Heaven grant the truth of

the old adage may not be exemplified in me! but I shall enclose for you the epistle, and expect you to read it in this place. You will find a marginal note of mine, by way of elucidation of a mysterious sentence, and then, concluding you have given it all the consideration it deserves, shall proceed to an inquiry into your sentiments on the subject.

TO MISS WESTBURNE.

“ Deeply sensible of the temerity of this morning’s intrusion on your retirement, the penitence with which I review a conduct in the least degree inimical to your sentiments of propriety, may perhaps be leading me into a further trespass, and will serve but to encrease rather than mitigate your displeasure; yet, impelled by a conscious rectitude of intention, with a passion not to be extinguished by the cold of your indifference, but which, through every vicissitude of life, is doomed to be

be the constant inhabitant of my breast ;
I venture once more to cast myself on
your mercy.

“ Indeed, I fear I have little to lose in
your esteem, but were it possible, thro’
the persevering assiduity of a sincere re-
gard, to render myself worthy of your
compassion, what enterprize would I
not encounter for the attainment of so
inestimable a reward ? Reluctant as I
am to wound so amiable a delicacy, by
any personal reflections whatever, and
particularly against one, whom, in con-
formity with your duty, I am sensible it
is your wish to love and respect ; yet
you must suffer me to plead the singu-
larity of your situation in my excuse.
Struck with the charms of your person,
the graceful dignity, blended with the
captivating diffidence, of your deport-
ment, and from that memorable mo-
ment entirely precluded the enjoyment
of your society, which I soon became
sensible was absolutely requisite to my

peace, and, at the same time, too well acquainted with the reigning *foiblesse* of lady Alicia, to doubt the cause of your seclusion, or to hope for its remission: can you condemn me for traversing the park, the wood, the terrace, and the plantation, daily and alternately, in the silent hope of once again conversing with the woman to whom my heart was irrevocably devoted? nor will I despair of your excuse of the innocent delight I felt in the gratification of the only hope I ventured to indulge; neither can you, I trust, have the cruelty to withhold your pardon, when I confess, that, encouraged by the gracious condescension of the message which was faithfully delivered to me the next morning, by your governess, I looked forward to a repetition of the pleasure I had once been so fortunate as to enjoy."

At this sentence, as you may imagine, I cast a look upon the French woman:
 "Pray, Madame," said I, "what message
fage

sage have you taken the liberty to deliver in my name, to Mr. Montgomery?"

"Ma foi none at all, not I"—

"Nay, you surely will not have the assurance to deny the fact, when he himself assures me."—

"Dat is no more den de politesse do require: I did make your baifemains to de gentilman, and say dat you be veré sorry dat you have no de honeur of vaiting on him, and dat you hope be more fortunè oder opportunitè."—

"I am much obliged to you," returned I, with some emphasis, and a second glance, not inexpressive of my chagrin, and then continued the perusal of my letter, from which I will no longer withdraw your attention.

"But this, through the vigilance of the enemy, as I almost instinctively apprehended, proved abortive, and I was sinking into despondency, when my good genius, in the person of the generous companion of your confinement, again

appeared, and by her I was informed, that on the removal of Mr. Westburne and his lady hung my only chance of another interview with the mistress of my affections; from which, ah! my dear Miss Westburne, she ventured to insinuate, her fears of incurring their displeasure alone withheld her. O! pardon the languid spark of happiness which this gentle implication of your pity enkindled in my breast:—too well I knew the influence I unwillingly possessed over the unsteady temper of your mother, and perfectly acquainted with her detestation of a retired life, I was convinced that my continuance at Westburne-Place alone detained her from a world, from which, she is free enough to confess, it is annihilation to be divided. I will not recapitulate the sequel; too well are you acquainted with the consequences of a rash, ungovernable passion; yet, although it has once offended, let me entreat you not to believe it no less timid,

less

less humble, or less respectful, than the superiority of its object demands.

“ I am most peculiarly situated, to encourage the most distant hope of obtaining your approbation by a repetition of those clandestine overtures, which I now blush to reflect upon, would be equally an insult to your character, and an injury to my own. — Though under the sanction of rank and fortune, I am authorized to propose my suit, yet with trembling consciousness, I confess, there is one (may it not prove insurmountable) objection I have reason to fear from a part of your family, which will take every form but its own to undermine my peace; but I thank God, thro’ the timely interposition of your charms, I am guiltless; and should the offer of my hand be blessed with the passport of your acceptance, I will face every difficulty, and fear no danger but the forfeiture of your esteem.

“ Let

“ Let the benevolence of your heart prevail—cherish compassion, till compassion grows into regard :—Ah! whither would my presumptuous hopes transport me! —Miss Westburne, you know not the supreme happiness it is in your power to bestow, any more than words can exhibit a faithful representation of the contending emotions of love, hope, fear, and admiration, which at this moment agitate the breast of your devoted,

VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY.”

Well, what do you think of a love-letter? is not there something very formal in the style of it? The language does not flow like the natural effusions of the heart—But tell me, what am I to do Selima?—the man’s proposals seem to be very honourable, and I am a poor prisoner, you know : this nursery is the very Bastile itself to me, from which even a revolution might not effect my emancipation. I am not in love ;
that

that is certain ; but if compassion, as he says, may grow into a tenderer sentiment, I am as sorry for him as it is possible to be, and surely if he behaves kindly to me, I cannot be so ungrateful as not to entertain a reciprocal regard. Yet I feel so awkward when I think of his writing to my father on the subject : There will be no running back, you know, when once the application is made, and by my consent too. What shall I do ? Pray consult Mrs. Anne and Mrs. Leslie :—I have begged a little time for consideration, and that looks very forward, does it not ? I dare say he will think himself perfectly sure of me, and perhaps' if I should not consent to marry him at last, say I have used him ill.—Bless me ! marry indeed ! the very word has frightened me out of my wits. Well, good night ; I will write no more, though I cannot sleep, lest you should suffer the contagion of my distracted brain,

brain, and bear a part in the agitation
of your friend,

JULIA WESTBURN.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVII.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

GENEROUS soul! Julia, self will prevail: I must relate my own adventures before I say a syllable of yours, though I have not neglected them, I assure you, as shall appear in the sequel. But this poor Dr. Smith! If ever man deserved!—but dear heart, it is not to deserve always to ensure the wayward affections of a silly girl. I do love him most assuredly; it would be downright impiety not to love merit so exalted—goodness so exemplary—but I would not marry him for a diadem.

Come

Come, come, Julia, I cannot be unmerciful, I will release your patience from the agonies of suspense; though, if I may trust my own judgment for an interpretation of your sentiments, I fear the communication I have to convey will not afford much relief to your mind. You must marry, my poor girl. Such is the wise counsel of the ladies to whom you have appealed:—for my part, I am silent; I learned my catechism betimes, and remember it I hope too well “to do unto others”—but you know the precept, and will, I doubt not, applaud me for the practice; all I have to say on the subject is, that my fervent prayers are for the advancement of your felicity, and that whatever way you decide, your determination may prove a solid basis of lasting happiness.

You cannot imagine how your prudence is extolled merely for the deliberation you have bestowed on the awful and respectable ceremony of matrimony.

mony. " Miss Westburne," said Mrs. Anne, " is sensible and considerate ; she is superior to the romantic notions which too often instil themselves into the giddy minds of the girls of this age"—and her eyes at the same time were fixed upon me, with an expression of more resentment than I ever beheld in them before. My own were cast down in an instant, and I bit the finger of my glove just, like Rachel Philpot, when caught in the commission of a theft by her governess : but my feelings were acute beyond description ; I would die cheerfully, if you will believe me, to preserve the life, the health, or happiness, of my beloved benefactress : but to consign myself to a living death, to commit the crime of perjury, to entail upon myself a whole life, nay an eternity, of wretchedness, and not only to barter my own peace, but to destroy that of a worthy man, by a gnawing and perpetual discontent, which I well know I

should be unable to disguise, is a sacrifice which I think it is not within the laws of human nature to demand.

It was Mrs. Leslie who betrayed me ; she thought it right, and I conclude it was so ; yet I wish it were otherwise with all my soul ; then would my dear mamma have escaped the concern of knowing that my ungrateful heart could in any instance revolt against the wishes of her own.

In pursuance of the advice of my judicious confidante, which I related to you in my last, I was preparing to give my supposed innamorato an opportunity for the disclosure of his sentiments, if he really entertained any particular ones with regard to me, which I had been before so studious to prevent ; but in the interim, unhappily, the whole affair was revealed. I was called into the dressing-room, and by both my kind friends, each only too anxiously solicitous for my welfare, I was strenuously exhorted

to

to consider, how materially my interest was concerned in the decision of the moment; how many auspicious prospects presented themselves in an alliance with Dr. Smith, a man of unimpeached morals, exalted understanding, agreeable manners, and to whose personal advantages, said they in one voice, "I am sure no woman can possibly object." I protest, I could scarcely forbear smiling at the earnestness of the two ladies on this interesting point, tho' my heart was at the same time half broken to find itself compelled to agree with them in every one, except the principal; not that I suppose either of them would marry him, any more than myself, though they deck him out in such a profusion of irresistible charms.

What could I say, Julia? I acquiesced in the justice of their encomiums; my reason was convinced, but my heart was unaffected: in short (for I cannot repeat with any accuracy the remainder of our

N 2 conversation)

conversation) my benefactress was displeased, and I was miserable. Mrs. Leslie took my part, said I was very young, and that early marriages were seldom attended with the prudence which could alone promise the enjoyment of permanent felicity; to which she added, that she was certain, whilst I continued single, it would be my constant study to deserve and to return that more than parental tenderness, with which I had been cherished, and which she would be answerable I never should forfeit by engaging in a less prudent connexion than that which she now blamed me for declining. “ I fear,” said my protectress, “ your partiality blinds you to what mine teaches me to apprehend: her mind is but too evidently under the dominion of romance, and I may live to see—”

“ For Heaven’s sake, do not encourage such an idea,” interrupted my affectionate advocate; “ believe me, her heart

heart and understanding may equally be trusted with the guardianship of her conduct :—submit to them the disposal of her hand, and you will not fail to reap an ample recompence in the matured merits of the child you have adopted.”

Mrs. Anne looked at me, as if for some ratification of this benevolent prediction :—I could not speak, but I kissed the hand which was generously extended as a token of forgiveness, and hastily withdrew from a scene which I was no longer able to endure.

In my own chamber I was giving vent to the fullness of my breast, when I beheld the subject of my affliction cantering carelessly up the avenue, little conscious of the distress he had occasioned ; for this day at least I hoped to escape the dreaded explanation ; but I was disappointed : in about half an hour after his arrival in came Mrs. Leslie.

“ Now for a last effort to overcome the obstinacy of eighteen :” said she, “ who knows but a pretty fellow in person may effect, in two seconds, what two old women’s rhetoric, in two hours, has not been able to accomplish !”

“ I hope you do not think I am so fickle, Madam, or that any persuasions could have more weight”—

“ Pshaw, pshaw, away with you, do not fear my jealousy, I beseech you.”

“ Must I really go then ?” said I.

“ To be sure ; I thought it was your wish to bring the affair to as speedy a *denouement* as possible.”

“ Well, since an answer must be made, the sooner the formidable question is proposed, the better, perhaps,” said I, and down stairs I went, with a heigho from the bottom of my heart: in the breakfast parlour I found the gentleman waiting my approach, and collecting myself as well as I was able, accosting him with an affected air of gaiety and
unconcern,

unconcern, I enquired after the health of the family at Oatley Farm.

“ The family at the farm,” returned he, “ are honoured—but bless me !” then exclaimed he, looking in my face—“ what is the matter ? your eyes look red as if you had been weeping ?

“ The weather is so frosty, and I am continually in the air you know ; but you have not informed me of the health of your father and mother yet.”

“ Because,” said he, “ to confess the truth, my father and mother’s son engrosses, at this moment, a more particular part of my attention.”

“ O !” said I, starting from my seat to avoid the subject, “ I do believe you have never heard the last new song my old Master Duval has sent me : have you brought your flute ?”

“ No, no,” said he, seizing my hand, and drawing me from the harpsichord, “ charmed as I am with your accomplishments, you must not deprive me of this

this opportunity to sue for language of a more enchanting nature, than what your music master has taught you : the heart alone, my sweet Selima, must now be your instructor : long have I sought a favourable moment to cast myself at your feet, and make a full declaration of the passion which has long occupied my mind."

Diffimulation was no more ; my heart indeed instantaneously became the only dictator of my expressions.

" Forbear," cried I, " pray forbear, unless you would complete the distress with which I am almost overwhelmed. Do not condemn me for my vanity, when I confess that I have been already sufficiently punished in the conviction of having innocently inspired your mind with a partiality, which it will never be in my power to return."

" Never !" reiterated he, in a tone which cut me to the soul—" then am I for ever doomed to wretchedness !—is this

this the miserable conclusion of all my hopes? for indeed, Miss Worthy, I am not ashamed to say, I have flattered myself—had I not cause to flatter myself?”

I could not answer, but a deep sigh spoke the oppression of my heart.

“ Might I not from the cruel kindness of your behaviour”—

“ I confess it,” said I, “ and I ask your pardon. Alas! till of late I was unconscious—indeed, indeed my conduct was merely the effect of friendship and inexperience: most sincerely do I wish that yours had been no more.”

“ You honour me with your friendship then,” said he; “ I am not bereft of every consolation—your friendship,”

“ You do, and ever will, possess,” said I, “ there is not, at this moment, a man upon earth, for whom I entertain half the respect.”

“ O! may not then such generous sentiments, by an unremitting study to oblige,

oblige, in time be converted into a passion no less tender?"

"No, no," said I, eagerly interrupting him, beware of giving place to an expectation which would only perpetuate your concern; for on the contrary, were there any power in this world capable of obliging me to receive your addresses, every sensation of esteem and approbation would immediately be transformed into abhorrence and disgust."

"Indeed!" said he—"It is a strange sentiment!"

"It may be so," said I, "but it is no less unalterable, I assure you. To be ingenuous, the tears I have shed to-day were in consequence of your presupposed attachment: my kind friends, fully sensible of your merit, were too urgent for my happiness, and if their persuasions could not prevail"—

"I see," said he, "I feel the force of the remark, and must resign myself to a fate which is inevitable."

"If

“ If you please,” said I, impatient to make even the shadow of an atonement for the error I had committed—“ if you please I will promise you faithfully never to marry any other man.”

“ No, most noble-minded innocence, I am not so unworthy as to take a mean advantage of your compassion : since my affection is not permitted to promote, it never shall prevent, your happiness.—Farewell,” added he, kissing my hand and washing it with his tears, “ from this moment I must take an everlasting leave of you ; never, more shall you be troubled with importunities, which are repugnant to your repose.”

“ Nay, nay,” said I, “ do not suffer me to linger under the remorse of having given you pain : let me soon hear that you are happy.”

So saying, I rushed out of the room, to conceal the tears which no longer would be withheld.

From

From my own chamber I saw my poor disappointed friend depart, with a different pace and altered countenance from those with which he approached the house; nor did he leave me in a state of mind much more enviable than his own: for a moment pity, though I believe, Julia, their natures are more distinct than you imagine, assumed the semblance of love, and I almost wished—no, no, no, it did not come to that neither; but as you say, I was as sorry for the poor soul as it was possible to be, and I moralized so admirably—O! thought I, if every giddy girl could know the feelings of my heart at this juncture, the crying sin of vile coquetry would be no more. For my part I vowed—O! how did I vow, but it was not on the bible remember, that I never would, no, never, look at a man again with a smile of complacency on my face.

Seriously, for I was very serious then, I assure you, though I am rattling away at present.

present—I remained in this doleful wood till the bell summoned me to dinner, a ceremony in which I played my part but very indifferently : it was no sooner over than I had recourse to this agreeable expedient, and found it no less efficacious than I expected. Indeed on consideration I begin to hope the matter may not be so lamentable as I apprehended.--- Love is a disease, something like the tooth-ach I believe, very painful and tormenting, but seldom mortal—unless it be on the stage; and even there, it is generally with the auxiliary aid of a concealed dagger or a bowl of poison. Who knows but absence for a while, and a few new faces particularly, if there can *possibly be found any as agreeable as my own*, may bring about a wonderful metamorphosis? Such miracles have been performed, and even in modern ages too: so that my dear Doctor may be better off at last, than in marrying a foolish girl, whom he never could make happy, and

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whom I verily believe would be wicked enough to hate him for having defrauded her of her liberty. How delighted I should be to behold a well authenticated paragraph in some communicative newspaper, setting forth that he was united in the holy bands of matrimony to some heiress of immense fortune, with the addition of every mental and personal accomplishment, to render the marriage-state completely happy !

No damsel ever exulted more in the acquisition of a new lover, than I should in the successful attractions of such a rival.

My two dear friends have already humanely consigned every trace of my disobedience to oblivion ; not a syllable of what has passed is ever to be mentioned more.

But I must leave you for the present. Lady Kately and her ponies are at the door : the Melfords are expected too.

Lady

Lady Kately is going to take me home with her immediately ; she would not admit of an excuse ; and on Mrs. Leslie's kind promise not to leave Heathcott before my return, and my mamma's permission, I cheerfully complied. So adieu, my dear Julia. Heaven bless you, and direct your judgment ; if you marry Montgomery, may he prove deserving of you : may your happiness be permanent, and equal to the ardent wishes of your ever faithful

SELIMA WORTHY.

O 2

LETTER

LETTER XXXVIII.

MISS WESTBURNE

TO

SELIMA.

O Selima! can I ask you to pity the murderer of her own repose? In conformity with the dictates of the little prudence I possess, and the more mature judgment of your worthy friends, I have, I fear, sacrificed the future happiness of my life:—till the sentence was irrevocable, I did not conceive the difficulty of moulding the stubborn impulses of the heart to the cold and steady precepts of unimpassioned reason. As a friend, Mr. Montgomery is certainly respectable; his understanding is of a superior class, and his sentiments appear to be
such

such as must claim the esteem of all who are well acquainted with them :— but when I think of him as the husband, with whom I am to pass the remainder of my days, whose will must be my law, and whom I must swear at the altar to love, honour and obey, I cannot endure the weight of my own reflections : but it is over—I must learn patiently to submit to the fatal consequences of my own folly, which has dropped the semblance of discretion which it had assumed, and discovers itself in all its natural weakness. How superior are you in the rare and inestimable gift of self-knowledge, on which the happiness of life principally depends ! Yet I confess I am surprized, that the tender affection of the “ *bewitching doctor* ” failed to excite a reciprocal passion in your breast. From your description of him, every thing that is amiable in the sex seems to be united in his character ; and I could not withhold a sympathizing tear, that his fate should unkindly separate him from

merits so congenial with his own:—but as you say, there is no answering for the wayward affections of a *silly girl*; and it is difficult to discover when it is most for our interest to combat with, or to yield to, their instigations. I believe my trembling fingers had blotted half a dozen sheets of paper, before I could acquire sufficient resolution to dispatch the momentous acquiescence which was to decide my fate; though I did not then foresee all the horrors of penitential anguish I was doomed to undergo.

The purport of my epistle, as you may suppose, was merely a reference to the will of my father, with a promise to resign myself implicitly to his decree, together with a word or two by way of exculpating myself from the *kind* insinuations of my trusty Duenna.

It appears inconceivable, but really, from the discomposed state of my mind for a day or two, I even felt wholly incapacitated to avail myself of this ever
 consolatory

consolatory intercourse with my friend. When I took leave of you in my last, and laid my restless head upon the pillow, which I well knew was too much the friend of meditation to entice me to repose, as the most probable means to calm my troubled breast, I called upon the muse, and the muse kindly condescended to attend upon my wish, and in some sort enabled me to fabricate an address to prescience. But alas! the sagacious power (perhaps because so clumsily invoked) deigned not to shield me with the preservative guardianship of her wisdom.

Before I write again, I conclude I shall be informed of the unrepealable decision of my father: till then, in your happiness only must be comprized the comfort of your

JULIA WESTBURNE.

Ah! deign thy heav'nly essence to impart,
Inform my mind, and fortify my heart:
Child of experience! well instructed maid,
Descend in truth's unspotted garb array'd;

On

On me thy nice, extracted incense pour,
 And by the former teach the future hour;
 O! learned Prescience!
 By thy sage mother's decent handmaid dress'd,
 Disdain henceforth the borrow'd filmy vest;
 Wove in wild fancy's light ethereal loom,
 No more a dazzling brilliancy assume,
 Or with unsteady, visionary fires,
 Tip my vain hopes, and kindle false desires.
 Let no light phantoms, fleeting as the wind,
 Pervert my reason or mislead my mind;
 No waking dreams fair images disclose,
 Which promise bliss, but terminate in woes;
 Nor in the motley robe of idle fears,
 The hideous fiend black superstition wears;
 With horror my affrighted soul alarm,
 My faith pervert, my strongest hopes disarm;
 Perpetual doubt indulge, and fruitless care,
 And plunge my trembling soul in deep despair.
 Thy own wise parent's rigid rules preserve,
 Nor from her precious maxims vainly swerve,
 But from her hoarded store distil a balm,
 The agitated sea of error calm;
 To reason's eye present the polish'd glass,
 And shew the future ills I'm doom'd to pass.
 Be thou my mistress and watchful guide,
 The threatening tempest teach me to avoid;
 Or where discerning Prescience can but shew
 Th' impending danger, not avert the blow;
 My sinking spirits raise, my heart sustain,
 And aid my struggles through this vale of pain.

LETTER XXXIX.

SELIMA

TO.

MISS WESTBURNE.

THOUGH you do not write Julia, I will; yet I cannot help being a little on the fidgets to divine the cause of a breach in your punctuality, which has hitherto been as invariable as my own: sometimes my fears will predominate, and sickness stares me in the face, exhibiting her haggard form, as the only ostensible cause of so uncommon a neglect: again, a moment's reflection accuses me of anticipating evils, which I trust are scarcely within the purposes of time, and bids me consider how many trifling

trifling incidents may have had the power for one post to interrupt the regularity of our correspondence; I will therefore suspend my apprehensions, and endeavour to silence the troublesome suggestions of an over-anxious friendship.

To return therefore to the situation in which I abruptly resigned my pen to meet Lady Kitely: I think I once gave you a slight hint of some laughable attentions with which I have latterly been complimented. Can you imagine any thing half so intolerable as such an antiquated, precise, cross, proud!—but for his visit on Friday—he had sacrificed to the Graces with so wonderful an effect, and I was so struck with his spruce wig in new buckle, two additional curls on each side the toupee, his *chapeau bien trouffée*, and immovably fixed under his left arm, with his golden-headed cane, profound emblem of mental solemnity and erudition, most emphatically supported

ported in a parallel with his nose by the other, that I was obliged to hem twice at least, before I could be perfectly convinced of the security of my heart.—What were all the perils it had so lately escaped to this! I bit my lips, and took care not to smile though, for I thought that would be coquetry: but dear me, my gravity was most bewitching, it was so rare, so valuable an accomplishment: I believe he fancied I had been practising it to complete the conquest I had very involuntarily begun. What am I to do with the people? The deuce is in the men, I believe: let them take care of themselves; I will not make myself ridiculous for their sake, but smile or frown as the humour of the moment inclines: they lay snares to entrap the hearts of the poor women, and when they find themselves caught in their own toils, have the effrontery to condemn us for the consequences. But, alas! the chastisement of my poor Corydon has
not

not been wholly confined to the palpitations of the heart : his punishment has been as singular as it is evident. Unfortunately on hearing of my engagement here, his gallantry, even overcoming the yet unviolated laws of ceremonious etiquette, induced him to begin angling for an invitation to this seat of intoxication, riot and buffoonery, where it seemed he never before had visited—A favour which, to my utter chagrin, its fair mistress was too much devoted to the rules of hospitality and politeness not instantly to grant.

In consequence of which, on Tuesday morning, little aware of the ludicrous conclusion of his visit, this august personage, neatly accoutred as before, was ushered into the saloon.

“ I flatter myself,” said he, as he advanced, “ that I at this moment enjoy the pleasure of beholding the fair lady of this antient house, in full possession of all the inestimable blessings within
the

the power of the goddess Hygeia to bestow." Then addressing himself to me, "Miss Worthy, *your*, and let me presume to add *my*, amiable friend Mrs. Anne Aubrey, has conferred on me the honour"—

"Of being the newscarrrier of her good health I hope," interrupted I—"that the good lady you mentioned just now, continues her visit at Heathcott. Pray, have you got a letter for me, Mr. Melford?"

"Do, my angelic creature, restrain the rapidity of your ideas," said he—"I have brought you a letter: but you are so volatile, you quite derange—what were you saying of a visitor at Heathcott? I do not recollect having heard of any since your departure. You do not mean Mrs. Woodley, I presume!"

"Lard, no! Mrs. Woodley indeed! I believe Mrs. Woodley never was taken for the goddess of health before!" exclaimed I, rather too pertly I confess.

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P

"O!

“ O! I begin to understand you :—
It was the goddess Hygeia you meant,
who presides”—

“ Certainly,” said I; “ but do be
kind enough to leave the goddess in the
clouds, and me to the perusal of my letter.”

“ O fie! Miss Worthy, I am sure you
would not be guilty of such a rudeness
for the world—Do not you know, that
breaking the seal of a letter in company
is a solecism in good breeding, which”—

“ Pshaw! a punctilio as old-fashioned
and formal as”—

“ As what? Are you at a loss for a
simile, my little mad-cap?”

“ By no means—Is it possible, when
you are present?”

Lady Kately looked alarmed, thinking the raillery too palpable to escape detection. But there was no danger: on the contrary, I obtained a bow of gratitude for the implication: the sovereign power of vanity having ingeniously contrived

trived to transform a direct satire on his person into an oblique encomium on his wit. It must be one of the sharpest lances ridicule can aim, which is capable of penetrating the armour of self-love. But to end the controversy :

“ Come,” said her Ladyship, “ as you know your friends are well, Selima, you shall pocket your epistle for the present, and not deprive us of your conversation.”

To cut short the unentertaining chit-chat of a morning visit ; just as my old beau had carefully stroked down his ruffles, and was drawing on his gloves deliberately, as the usual signals of his departure, the conclusion of the chace was announced, by the great hall echoing with the sounds of ‘ Tally ho ! Yoax, Ringwood !’ and similar efforts of vociferation. The return of the sportsmen soon made a considerable, though not a very welcome (to speak for myself) addition to our party.

An introduction of course took place, and Sir Richard shook the hand of his unexpected guest, till the powder flew out of his wig; and I believe my youthful Adonis was thrown into an universal tremor for the safety of his joints, which were in no small peril of dislocation. The unsympathizing Baronet welcomed him with all the rude warmth of old English hospitality: at the same time, with a leer at one of his companions behind his back, I overheard him say,

“Smoke the old prig: Shall us make him free of Foxhunters’-hall, eh, my buck? We’ll prove his mettle, I warrant him.” Then turning to Mr. Melford, who was once more preparing to take leave, cried, “What the devil! you are not going to give us the slip before dinner, I hope!”

“I must beg to be excused; I expect—I have an engagement.”

“O!

“ O ! D—n your engagements ! you are engaged to us : possession is nine points in the law. We have got you here, and here you shall remain.”

“ Pray excuse me ; the roads are so infamously bad, and I am very apprehensive of being driven in the dark.”

“ Never mind that ; you must stay till morning, then. My dame always takes care that the beds are well aired : she has that merit, to give the devil his due.” At length the matter was adjusted to the apparent satisfaction of all parties, and the time before dinner was passed away in tolerable tranquillity : but when that was ended, and my imprudent Ladyship was called on for a toast, without the smallest forethought of the evil consequences which were to ensue, I drank the health of my quondam friend Charles Courtley : at the same time, as I inadvertently fixed my eyes on the lovely author of his exile, I fancied I perceived an emotion in her

countenance it pained me to have called forth : but this is not the circumstance to which I alluded.

Only conceive my astonishment, when the old hunk, who had placed himself at my elbow, illiberally repeated the name with such a volubility of abuse, as I should not have supposed would have been suffered to defile the lips of so finical a gentleman. He was amazed, that any lady of delicacy would countenance so frivolous and dissipated a character. “ After this last monstrous act of folly and disobedience,” exclaimed he, “ leaving his most amiable parents in affliction, and that (as it is most natural to suppose) in company with some unprincipled woman ! But I am sorry to say, the young people of this age pay very little regard to decency and decorum. I have heard my grandmother say”—

“ What the devil !”—from the bottom of the table—“ cannot you let
your

your old grandmother rest in her grave? Come, come; no demur to a lady's toast. Fill the 'squire a bumper, half a pint of port, I say. D—n it, we must lay the ghost of his grandmother."

The 'Squire remonstrated, but in vain. "Fill it up! fill it up!" with an oath or two, echoed from every chair about the table; excepting only Lady Kately's and my own, which were presently vacated, I assure you; and we soon, very thankfully, found ourselves in a quiet room, far removed from this scene of brutality and confusion. "I doubt," said her ladyship, "Sir Richard has a design against Mr. Melford."

"So much the better," said I, "he deserves to be punished for the malignancy with which he has attacked the character of a man of worth; whose slightest merits are as far superior to any that he possesses"—

"Come, come, my love," said she, taking my hand with a smile, "you must

must restrain the warmth of your resentment ; you ought rather to feel yourself obliged for the uncontrollable effusions of jealousy, which are the most irrefragable testimonies of true love, we are informed."

" Jealousy, indeed !" repeated I, ready to laugh at the idea, in spite of my vexation, " I have no patience with the old fool."

" Well, I can readily forgive you," said she ; " though never doomed myself to be a victim of the destructive passion, I always feel peculiarly interested for those who are ; particularly where any untoward obstacles intervene to obstruct the happiness of a worthy pair. But with regard to you, I trust they will not prove insurmountable : the young man, I believe, is as deserving as your partiality describes, and as the object of his attachment is so amiable"---

" My dear Lady Kitely," interrupted I, " you never were more mistaken in
your

your life. I believe indeed the true cause of poor Courtley's banishment is a hopeless passion, but not for me; he thinks not of me, but as of a friend, upon my honour."

"Nor you of him, Selima?"

"No, indeed," replied I smiling, "my heart is proof against all the machinations of the blind boy."

"But he does love," you say with a sigh, but half suppressed.

"Yes," said I, "and is unhappy, therefore he has a claim upon my pity, a valueless tribute, which it is not in humanity to withhold." "Poor young man!" said her ladyship—"I am surprized"—then suddenly checking herself, endeavoured to give a turn to the conversation, a wish in which I joyfully concurred, as I began to condemn my own indiscretion, for having brought a subject on the tapis which might awaken sensations injurious to the little peace which a forced marriage at the early age
of

of seventeen had permitted her to enjoy. We chatted indifferently on less interesting subjects, till the arrival of the tea equipage, which, with a compassionate attention to the usually abstemious stranger, was immediately ordered to be announced below; "but when opposed to *wine*, alas! how weak is *love*." No beaux honoured us with their appearance; the tea-cups waited, the water bubbled for a while, then sighing, sunk as it were, in silent resignation to its deserted fate, and so remained, till the clock struck ten, and her ladyship was about to order a little cold chicken up stairs, when lo and behold! (if my hand can regain a sufficient degree of steadiness to describe so ludicrous a scene) my bald-pated swain, with the hinder part of his wig turned before, and one of his dark, full eye-brows entirely shaved off, was brought into the room. At this moment I am obliged to pause, to indulge
the

the risibility, the mere recollection of so grotesque a figure so irresistibly provokes : perhaps I ought to be much concerned on the occasion, but for my life I cannot. When people are so studious to make themselves ridiculous, should they be angry that a neighbourly hand is stretched out in friendly assistance of the design ? But to return—" Here" said Sir Richard, or one of his jovial friends, who was the other supporter of this tottering mass of inebriated antiquity---" Here Miss Worthy is the most obsequious of your slaves, who with persevering zeal has been drinking goblets to your health till he is no longer able to express the ardour of his passion ; he comes to prostrate himself at the feet of his dulcinea."

" Yes, yes," said he, " let me alone ---hic-up---I can prostrate myself without any body's help ;" and in confirmation of the assertion, disengaging himself from the props which had upheld him,

him, and staggering a few paces, down he fell with his head on my knee, which, however, from a sudden impulse of surprise, starting from my seat, I hastily consigned to the carpet, on a level with the beastly carcase to which it belonged. Mercy on me, what a loathsome reptile is a drunken man! Lady Kitely, in inexpressible distress, rang the bell, and called for his servant, but here alas! the old adage was verified, the man being reduced to the same miserable condition as his master, therefore for her ladyship's footman was reserved the honour of removing this fallen pillar of the British senate.

Sir Richard enjoyed the jest, and the more in proportion as it gave concern to his amiable wife. A great deal of wit passed at the expence of the love-sick old batchelor, which had little to recommend it, either in point of edification or amusement, and indeed soon became too gross to be endured, except
by

by those minds to which it is congenial, and to those, as soon as supper was withdrawn, we chearfully resigned the full enjoyment of their own species of conviviality. How wonderful it is that such lives as are here exemplified, should ever prove of any tolerable duration. After going late, or rather early, to their beds, where “ their drenched natures *must lie* as in a death,” they were out again by day-break, and assembled on the field. Old Melford, I hear, decamped in unappeaseable and not unjust resentment, as soon as he was able to discover the injuries he had sustained; but here comes the post-boy, and, if my stars are favourable, a letter from my friend: it is even so. My sweet Julia, keep up your spirits, do not marry the man after all, if your heart forbids it: he may call you a jilt perhaps, but is it not a thousand times better even to be so opprobriously stigmatized, than to entail upon yourself wretchedness for

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life, besides making him, who innocently occasioned your misery, while he sought to make you happy, a partaker of it? I sympathize with you most feelingly, for I have formed very lively ideas of the horrors of such a situation: still I must admire your well-timed tuition of me, amidst your own difficulties, in behalf of the sighing doctor. Really, Julia, on consideration, I am much surprized that you are not smitten with the charms of Montgomery, who, from your description, appears to me to be a combination of perfections: is not that a little in your own style? Yet I am far from wishing seriously to retaliate, for your gentle nature is too pliable to injunctions of *wisdom* and *discretion*, so I will not exert the discretional talents I am mistress of, in opposition to those of the heart, which, when composed of as good materials as yours and mine, I hold to be the safest monitor; though, were my opinion of importance
enough

enough to sway the conduct of the multitude, far would it be from me to promulgate so dangerous a doctrine; nor should I think any pretty little gentlewoman, just liberated from her leading-strings, like ourselves, in the least degree exculpated by pleading the emotions of the heart, whilst she was actuated only by the wanderings of the brain, were she to steal down a back stair-case, or throw herself from a garret window, into the arms of a divine fellow. But not to bewilder myself with my own logic, I believe the heart, the soul, and all the functions of sensation and intellect, are by an over-ruling Wisdom graciously assigned their proportionate offices in the government of our actions through life, and where one assumes the sovereignty of the whole, the common weal must be the victim of so unnatural an usurpation.

I have just received a note which distresses me, from Heathcott: Mrs. Anne
thinks

thinks it proper to resent the ill-treatment of her highly respected friend, and, as his visit here was on my account, does not choose me to remain in the house where he has suffered so gross an indignity ; therefore to-morrow her carriage is to convey me to a home, to which it is impossible I can ever return with reluctance : yet so abrupt, so unfriendly, a departure from a woman, whose gentle temper and unhappy fate grieves me to the soul—but I am kindly enjoined to be cautious not to wound her feelings, if I can possibly avoid it, and Mrs. Leslie's removal, which would have expedited, must serve as an apology for the suddenness of our parting.

I have not, I assure you, cast such a reflexion on my own taste, as to have passed over your poetical enclosure with disregard, and I think the “ well-instructed” dame was but a fullen baggage to turn a deaf ear to so sweet an invocation.

Farewell,

Farewell, I have laid a heavy tax on
your patience: may it not be entirely
worn out before I sign your release in
the ever *welcome* (but now superlatively
so) name of

SELIMA WORTHY.

Q 3

LETTER

LETTER XL.

MRS. WOODLEY

TO

MRS. GOWARTH.

WELL, my dear lady, pardon my familiarity, but I am so rejoiced somehow, in the most distant prospect of the accomplishment of your wishes.

The girl has left us for a while; would it were for ever. Well, well, who knows—it is my maxim that all things turn out for the best; we must have a little patience—slow and sure—most haste the worse speed, as my poor Samuel used to say.

The old fox, her bosom friend, Mrs. Leslie, is decamping shortly too. O!
madam,

madam, madam, this is a fine stroke of fortune in our favour: there was a thorn I feared would have stuck like a burr in my side, but now their plots and counter-plottings will be all over; and if I do not make good use of my time in her absence, may I be discarded from your confidence! Does your ladyship think I am not a match for a silly girl? You may imagine what a romantic fool it is, when I tell you that she has just refused a match with a physician in good practice, besides a tolerable inheritance on the death of his father: she would have found that, I believe, a more certain establishment, than any of her castles in the air, built upon your deluded sister's promises: but who can wonder that the child's head is turned in so unnatural a situation?—Now she has bewitched a member of parliament, an old doating fool in this neighbourhood, and to be sure, Mrs. Anne Aubrey, dear easy hearted soul, is so allured
by

by the flattering prospect of so creditable a connexion for her favourite ! and she shall not want for stimulatives, I warrant you. I will work upon her partiality you shall see, till it falls foul upon itself ; but I say no more, I have deep designs ! and if they be executed to your satisfaction, I know your generosity. Heaven grant you as great a certainty of all your wishes, as I dare venture to pronounce—O ! that I could divide myself, that I could be in two places at once in a manner ! then should you be relieved forthwith from the burden of the torments which you so patiently endure.

Bless you, my ever honoured lady ! that you may enjoy all the blessings you deserve, is the constant prayer of your faithful and devoted, humble servant,

REBECCA WOODLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XLI.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

EARLIER than the date of this, I expected once again to have rested beneath the sheltering roof of that dear parent who has given me more than life, the means by which I live; but how short a step can human wisdom discern of the dark space which lies before it. But to give you as succinct a narrative as possible of the four last melancholy and memorable days, it is necessary to revert to the conclusion of my last.

Our

Our sportsmen, a motley set, whose peculiar characteristics I have not found an opportunity to delineate, and who, at such a period of momentous and calamitous concerns, cannot claim the attention of a thought, returned to a late dinner, as usual, with their patron; after which the bottle either passed with uncommon rapidity, or the nature of their beverage, which was a fresh importation of French wines, had a more speedily exhilarating effect on the brain, for at the hour of nine, such a group of maniacs presented themselves in the drawing-room, as I even now in the recital tremble to recollect. The tea things were removed, a custom so seldom "honoured in the breach," that it was become invariable, but on this unfortunate eve of accumulated horrors, the observance of it proved the cause, at least the ostensible one, of misery and confusion, almost beyond the power of language to describe.

"Where

“Where is your crockery-ware, madam?” said the reeling Baronet; I have been drinking Champagne and Burgundy, and I want a bowl of tea to settle my head.”

“You shall have some immediately.” replied his gentle lady, amiably concealing the worm which preyed upon her peace. “Could I have had an idea that such was your wish, they should not have been removed.”

“What the devil! do you sneer at me? suppose it was or was not my wish, what is it to you? I have a right to be master in my own house, I hope. It’s come to a fine pass if a man must be talked to by his wife.”

“Dear Sir,” said I, “consider”—inadvertently you may be assured, for I instantly felt a conviction of the impropriety of such an interference, but fortunately a ferocious glance was the only ill consequence of my imprudence. The table was expeditiously refurnished with all
the

the necessary apparatus for the innocent refreshment, which on that fatal day was so particularly distinguished, but alas! the poor self-devoted Baronet receiving the tottering cup from the trembling hand of his agitated wife, and beholding the painfully resisted tears at length gushing from her aching eyes, yielded himself to the most terrifying and outrageous frenzy, swearing that a whimpering shrew was a more infernal torment than a scolding one, kicking over the china, and overturning the water urn, in the violence of his fury, which unhappily discharged its boiling contents on the delicate limbs of that unrepining excellence, whose hard fate had early marked her for the victim of intemperance and insensibility. Not even the sudden shock of so frightful an accident had the power to dissipate, for a moment, the vapours of intoxication. Riot and disorder supported their ascendancy, and as I led the patient and dis-

regarded

sufferer to her own apartment, the now more peculiarly disgusting sound of "more wine! more wine!" reverberated round the house.

The anguish of the scald, accompanied by an agitation of mind which may easily be conceived, conspired to produce very evident symptoms of an approaching fever. Having made repeated applications, in vain, to the person who ought to have presided in such a case, I sent to M. without delay, requesting the attendance of Dr. Smith, who, on inquiry, I found to be the family physician, together with the best surgeon in the place. The former unluckily was engaged, though I flatter myself we have sustained no real disadvantage from the disappointment, as the gentleman who has visited us, as his substitute, seems to be perfectly endowed with the knowledge requisite to his profession; and on my own part, had it been a season for the intrusion of any selfish considerations,

It was certainly a rencontre I should have been particularly anxious to avoid.

I wrote to Heathcott a brief account of the incidents of the night, and consequently to postpone the return I had intended. I sent my letter as soon as it was light in the morning, but it was given to the groom, and, owing to some of the effects of irregularity, which example is too apt to diffuse, it had not passed the gates before the carriage drove up to the door. Its arrival altered my design, as the distance is very short, and the trouble of sending for me was already incurred, I thought it best to see Mrs. Aubrey myself, and acquaint her in person with the situation of the family I was with, which I well knew would be deemed an ample apology for not complying with her request. The wish to see Mrs. Leslie before her visit to her brother, which has now little chance for its gratification, coincided in fixing my preference of a plan, which succeeding horrors were impending

pending to destroy. In the very moment that I was setting my foot in the chaise, the apparently lifeless body of the wretched Baronet was presented to my eyes, as it was conveyed towards the house by several of his associates. I cannot so prostitute the sacred name of friend, as to distinguish any of them by that honourable title. That unhappy victim of his own imprudence had, on this fatal morning, entered on his favourite amusement in a state of enervation little calculated for the activity of the chase, which compassion shudders to acknowledge was the literal cause of the melancholy catastrophe which ensued. My removal, as it is unnecessary to inform you, was again suspended; my name was called on from every quarter of a family, which a dreadful concomitancy of misfortunes had suddenly bereft of those pillars on which its whole œconomy depended: humanity was prompt enough to tender what inexpe-

rience had not to bestow ; but I did my
 best, and I believe an ardent wish to
 serve, supplied me with abilities I did
 not before possess. At four this morn-
 ing, the wretched martyr to a weak and
 ill-directed mind, departed from a world,
 to which, alas ! his existence yielded
 neither ornament nor advantage, and
 wherein he was more likely to have en-
 creased than to have extenuated his er-
 rors : yet so dreadful, so untimely a dis-
 solution, cannot fail to call forth a sigh
 from a heart in any degree susceptible
 of the impressions of sympathy and com-
 miseration : his last moments were mo-
 ments of agony, on which human na-
 ture cannot but tremble to reflect. He
 was carried away in the vortex of in-
 temperance ; his errors proceeded not
 half so much from a predilection for, as
 from the habitude of, excess, and an al-
 most total ignorance of the calm enjoy-
 ments of sobriety. In infancy he lost
 his father, the only parent to whose di-
 recting

recting judgment the young men of the present age (I speak in general terms) will condescend to be in any degree subordinate: to add to this, he was the darling of his mother, and the heir to a very large fortune, two dazzling evils, which precipitated his fate: but to return to the melancholy subject of my present concerns.

The image of the long-neglected lady Kitley, from the fatal moment of the accident, which was to separate them for ever, incessantly dwelt upon the otherwise wandering senses of her dying husband: he remarked the peculiarity of her absence at such a crisis, with the most acute sensibility, to the great distress of his attendants, who durst not acquaint him with the situation to which the late ungovernable violence of his temper had reduced her: he acknowledged that her present inattention was the due reward of his past, and now bitterly lamented, conduct; but it was

R 3 inconsistent

inconsistent with the unvaried amiableness of hers. Even through the wildest paroxysms of his delirium, the same idea still floated on his bewildered imagination.

O Julia, conceive the misery of witnessing such unparalleled distress: my spirits, which have been miraculously supported, begin at length to sink under the united force of anxiety and fatigue.

I have endeavoured to methodize my thoughts, and to proceed with as much regularity through this tale of woe, as the broken intervals I have been able to dedicate to the employment would admit. Three days are now elapsed since it was begun; and three nights successively have I watched, beside the uneasy pillow of my sleepless friend. I often fancy I see a gleam of satisfaction in her languid eyes, on my approach, and that she receives with more than an usual resignation those unpalatable draughts, which are presented to her by the hand
of

of the woman, whom she has ever distinguished with regard; and sweet, my dear girl, though long may you be unacquainted with any child of sorrow, is the consolation of having smoothed one wrinkle in the bed of pain.

Lady Kitley's, though an exceedingly precarious, yet I flatter myself, is not a hopeless state; her fever, which has been, and still continues, very high, is termed by the faculty symptomatic, not more of the inflammation produced by the scald, from which its commencement must be dated, than of the conflicting emotions of her mind on its attendant circumstances. With the succeeding incidents during her confinement, you may naturally believe she yet remains unacquainted, and I cannot help trembling for the effects of so momentous a disclosure, when further concealment becomes impracticable.

I hear twice a day from Heathcott, the loved inhabitants of that place bear
but

but too warm a participation in all that affects their child, if there is not a degree of presumption in making use of so enviable an appellation; even abstracted from that concern, which their generous nature cannot fail to have imbibed for the sufferings of a neighbour so highly respected and esteemed, so deservedly beloved indeed by all who know her. The tears and wringing hands of the distracted poor, who feared to lose their all in the death of their benefactress, are unequivocal testimonies of the goodness of her heart.

To-morrow I expect the mother of the deceased Baronet, to whom I dispatched a messenger on the day of the fatal accident, which bereaved her of an only son; but unhappily illness, in conjunction with the infirmities common to her advanced age, prevented her immediately undertaking so long a journey.

Bless

Bless you, my dear Julia; it is a
prayer which flows spontaneously from
the heart of your wearied friend,

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER XLII.

MISS WESTBURNE

TO

SELIMA.

TO be human must be to sympathize in your distress; I know the susceptibility of your nature, I am fully sensible that your heart is ever ready to exert itself in the cause of the unhappy, and far am I from encouraging a wish to restrain that noble activity of spirit which stimulates you to succour, as well as to compassionate, the afflicted, and which so eminently exalts your character above the supine tenderness and weeping indolence from whence a bootless sigh is all that calamity can obtain. At the same time,

time, my Selima, you ought not to be unmindful that there is a duty to ourselves relative even to that of universal benevolence, which bids us to be careful of those blessings which may be rendered so valuable to our fellow-creatures. Should you suffer all regard for your own health to be lost in your attention to your friend, your friend must be a sharer in the consequences, and may, too probably, be deprived of those kind offices from which she now receives her only consolation.

I am quite metamorphosed since I wrote last, a letter from my father has effectually chased away the frightful spectres which my fears had raised, yet it was the most unkind one surely that ever was penned on an offence so reluctantly committed, and so sincerely repented of; but I trust his anger is not unappeasable, and may I never experience a greater degree of repugnance to the performance of any act of filial

duty, than at this moment of self-congratulation. Yet I must feel, I cannot help feeling, for the humiliating state of my poor, deluded father: never shall I forget that he is *my* father, though much I fear he would gladly divest himself of the remembrance that I am his child.

How apparent must be the indiscretions of the unguarded Lady Alicia to the great world in which they are displayed, when they are made so manifest by a variety of circumstances to such a poor prisoner as myself!

The forward petulence on the first arrival of Montgomery, the additional restrictions on my liberty from that time, the implication in his letter, and the unmerited fury expressed in my father's, are all sufficiently elucidated in the correspondence of her ladyship's woman, with my *dear* governess, who, by way of instigation to a trip into the North, has not only entrusted me with the important secret, but even indulged me with
the

the perusal of her friend's last epistle, which, as it is a rare *morceau*, and not intolerably long, I shall take the trouble of transcribing, for your edification and amusement.—

“ So poor Miss is in love, I find. Well, I always thowt Mr. Mungomery a very foin man, and a very civil gentleman too ; he is, I ashure you. I dont beleeve a wick ever passed over is hed, when he visited in Clarges-street, but he wood say, Sweet Mrs. Bell, du me the fever to except a triffle for a pare of gloves, or a ribbin, or sumthing or other of the like that was gentile and agriable. But well-a-day for poor Miss, I was not the ownly one in the famerly that thowt well of imm, besides herself. Lord ! if she knowed what a fume heer has bin ! My Lady fell into istaricks, and Mount-seer St. Jarmin, the knew Frenchman, thowt she was out of her mind : he was taking in breckfast when my master bringged in the letter, and enclosed the

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S

subject :

subject : hie did not think amiss of the preposal. Immself, it seems, and was all in a maize, when hee seed it so diffrintly receved elsweer. O my conscience, but thear was a huge fufs ! when Madam reaved, skriked, and made as if she wood tare her hare ; but she took good care of that, I warrent her ; she never forgets her buty.

“ A doctor was sent for in a hurry, for fere of any thing bad hap’ning from her frenzy.

“ Am I,” cried she to her froitened husband, “ to give place to a dirty, mean, insignificant brat of a common-al ? ”

“ Mercy on me ! how she did abuse your young lady, till my poor, simple master was fain to do the same, and give up the happyniss of his dowter to plaife a woman——a very sad woman, if you knowed all ; but that is nothing to hus sarvints, you see : sich peeple offens pay better than honeste foulks. When she
had

had ganed her pointe, she growd as
 quiet as a lamm, and slept as fast as
 a topp; but on waking, I bein in the
 room, she began to vent her compleants
 agane, and said much and more how her
 pride only was hurt on the occagion:
 but that was all a pertence; though she
 pertested she hated the feller, and always
 did, I am not such a ninny but I knows
 verv well that she loved him better even
 than she doos sumbody else. But I say
 nothing; thear's no bein too cawthufs;
 paper may cum to accidences. So wish-
 ing you a merry Crismas, and a happy
 new year when it cums, as my lady's
 bell rings, I must bid you farewel.—
 From your loving friend,

“ ARABELLA TRUSTY.

“ P. S. Wee are now at Bath, as you
 may see by the pouste-marke; wee left
 Briten when the cold wether set in, and
 are goin to Lunon before January is
 owt, wheer I suppose we must stay till af-
 ter my lady's confinement; so that I shall

not see you again this aige. Dear hart,
how sorry I am for you! berried alive
in a manner, without a sole to spake to
but poor Miss, whoo is no better than a
moap, to be shure: but my lady's bell
rings agane—so good boy once more.”

Is it not a delectable composition?
But as for poor Miss, she is either such
an incorrigible mope, or she is so much
interested in the subject, that she is not
able to pay a due tribute to the elegance
of the style.

I have written to my father in the
most submissive terms, and a final dis-
mission to my lover. So alert a recan-
tation may perhaps draw upon me the
charge of insensibility or deceit; but the
former will not impute to me any error,
in the transitory restoration of his do-
mestic peace, for which he seems too
willing to barter every other considera-
tion. And as for the latter, thank Hea-
ven, I am not subject to any law which
calls upon me to sacrifice my duty or
my

my happiness for the gratification of his wishes. Yet, as I do believe his regard is sincere, and far exceeds the merits of its object, I pity him from my soul, and have, I hope, expressed myself in such a manner, as to convince him that I am above the design of trifling with the feelings of a worthy man.

Adieu, my dear Selima : May the enjoyments of the approaching year obliterate the melancholy occurrences which have overclouded this season of general festivity ; and may your next letter be the vehicle of better tidings, prays your ever faithful friend,

JULIA WESTBURN.

LETTER XLIII.

THE HON. VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY

TO

CAPTAIN TALBOT.

THE die is cast, Harry, and I must content myself to live a bachelor. Is man a free agent, and is a life of celibacy to be the destiny of your friend? Ah! no; free agency was no more, when woman was created—fair, irresistible, all-ruling woman!—to whose despotic sovereignty all nations bow—the bane, the blessing of mankind. Alas! it has been my fate to experience the first, to the total exclusion of the latter. Fool that I was! to bask in the momentary sunshine of a delusive hope!—
I, who

I, who knew too well the infernal spirit that possessed the fair frame of the frail Alicia, that alluring Circe, whose seductive arts had nearly degraded me to a monster, from which disgraceful form no elysian subtlety could have restored me to myself.

That love is blind, is a truth of more than poetic authenticity : yet it has not rendered me insensible to the painful certainty, that Miss Westburne's reluctantly-permitted appeal to her father was an effort of prudence, unassisted by affection. Yet I blame her not : she intended not to deceive *me*, but she inadvertently deceived *herself*. Cool approbation mingled with compassion, a sentiment most prone to infuse itself into a feeling heart, and by youth and inexperience so easily mistaken for a more animated passion, united to the peculiar circumstances of her imprisoned state, stimulated her to a compliance, which she had no sooner yielded than she wished withdrawn.

withdrawn. From this consideration I confess (such is the nature of a sincere, disinterested attachment) that I feel a negative satisfaction in the non-accomplishment of my own wishes, having been thereby preserved from injuring the peace of her, whose happiness I gladly would make it the whole business of my life to promote.

I shall leave England immediately ; while Miss Westburne continues to be the patient victim of jealousy and unkindness, I dare not brave so forcible a temptation, to renew my hopes of rescuing her from one evil, by involving her in another : I mean, an union with a man not fortunate enough to be honoured with the preference of her heart. Her enfranchisement must be the signal of my recal. I have not fortitude equal to the continual contemplation of her sufferings, though I think I may venture to boast of sufficient magnanimity to behold and to rejoice in the felicity of the
 woman

woman I adore, in any situation of life; yes, even in that enviable one to which I so lately——but I will not be too minute at present on so interesting a subject. To confess the truth, however I may wish to disguise it to myself, tho' I hope to bear my disappointment like a man, I must also “ feel it like a man.”

I pray thee, Henry, be more liberal of thy correspondence; bestow a few more of thy idle moments on thy writing-desk. Believe me, it is a far more innocent employment than trifling with girls, whom you do not think worthy of a serious thought, and encouraging the vanity and credulity which you ridicule and despise. Besides, like a fly fluttering about a candle, you may be caught before you are aware.

If you have any compassion for a hopeless lover, a state with which I believe you are yet totally unacquainted,
nobody

nobody can form a juster claim to your
condolence than your very sincere and
disconsolate friend,

VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY.

LETTER

LETTER XLIV.

MRS. GOWARTH

TO

MRS. WOODLEY.

THE woman is distracted, I believe! What do you mean by stimulatives? Are you mad enough to endeavour to promote an event which would certainly establish the minion in that zenith of favour to which the infatuation of a romantic dupe has advanced her, and must naturally secure to her that bounty on which all my fears depend? Should ten or twenty thousand pounds be alienated from my family, it would break my heart, and I would tear up the very earth;

earth, but I would revenge myself for the injury.

I have never considered the girl to be an idiot : Is it probable, when she finds that her bread depends on her acquiescence, that she will persist in opposing the designs of her benefactress ? Do not be a fool, but exert your vigilance in keeping away every creditable suitor ; work upon her passions, call forth the latent meanness of her surreptitious origin, which still exists, however it may be obscured by the specious gloss of an elevated education. Engage her in a love-affair, and persuade her to elope with the footman, the gardener, or any other reptile insignificant enough to calm the perturbed spirit of an ambitious mother.

Gowarth is still alive : I begin to despair of a termination to the torments I endure. Peggy however is a good girl ; she is as faithful as yourself, and to her
fidelity

fidelity I owe some moments of respite
 from the loathsome chamber of disease.
 She is stationary as a rock, and in her
 presence I know no mischief can be ef-
 fected; or I should not be without ap-
 prehensions. I am not so much in fa-
 vour as I have been since the will was
 made. My caution has been lulled on
 the lap of security: but no matter; let
 him redress himself if he can: he may
 execrate me in his heart, but he cannot
 withdraw from me those solid comforts,
 which are an ample compensation for
 every other evil in the opinion of the
 wife. Gold is in itself youth, beauty,
 fame, and virtue. Between ourselves,
 I could name a person who can form
 but slight pretensions to any of the four,
 and who notwithstanding enjoys the most
 solid advantages of them all, in the pos-
 session of a good estate.

Whatever happens, I shall not return
 to England, unless the spirit of revolu-
 tion compels me to retreat. I am be-

come a good Catholic, and almost look upon myself as a naturalized French woman. I find a cheap absolution now and then very consolatory to a sickly conscience. As to my dear boy, I shall not put any constraint on his inclinations. I never could bear to contradict him—he is a lovely fellow. Who would have thought that the son of a man, whom you know I hated with a *mortal* hatred, was become the delight of my eyes, and the principal subject of my ambition.

Dear Woodley, do not lose sight of the animating consideration, that your own interest is closely interwoven with that of your friend,

LOUISA GOWARTH.

LETTER

LETTER XLV.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

THIS morning the remains of the ill-fated Sir Richard Kitley were deposited in the family mausoleum, which contains the mortal part of a long line of illustrious ancestors. His mother arrived time enough to take upon herself the dismal office of superintending the sacred obsequies : she is a fine old woman : at the age of seventy-six, she is not totally without the aches and pains incident to her years ; but her faculties are unimpaired, and her mind retains all the vigour of adolescence. At such a period

T 2

when

when the decay of nature is announced by a few bodily infirmities only, youth beholds as in a mirror the ultimate of all its hopes in this world, and is impelled to love and venerate that state which is the boundary of its earthly wishes.

The much-dreaded discovery is over : the widowed sufferer herself opened an avenue to the subject, which at first view I thought more terrible than any I had foreseen during her state of convalescence, which has happily continued almost uninterrupted since the date of my last. She has often hinted, and once confidentially acknowledged, to me, that it was her fixed determination, as soon as her health was sufficiently re-established to enable her to engage in so trying a concern, to demand a separation from a man, from whose irascibility of temper she knew not the enjoyment of a peaceful hour. She was much amazed when I intimated to her the expected

expected visit from her mother-in-law, whose advanced age undoubtedly was sufficient to render so long a journey, otherwise actuated than she has been, a very extraordinary undertaking. She rejoiced, however, at the prospect of a meeting, which she hoped would facilitate her design, to the execution of which she looked forward as the only basis whereon the future tranquillity of her life depended.

I then saw the danger of delaying any longer to communicate an event which had most fatally anticipated the intention she had expressed, and which sooner or later I knew it must be my office to impart: therefore summoning all the resolution I was mistress of, I performed the painful task. As I feared, her late declaration greatly aggravated the affliction and horror of our gentle relict. Repentment was immediately extirpated from her breast; the vices and follies of the deceased were no longer thought

of, she only remembered he was her husband; and his violent death, with its preceding agonies, entirely occupied her mind; insomuch that for two days the doctor pronounced that a relapse would be the certain consequence of the agitation of her spirits. We have, however, thank Heaven, escaped this menaced renewal of our distress, and his patient's recovery is again advancing in conformity with our most sanguine wishes.

Lady Kitley's sensibility was roused beyond the strength of her debilitated nerves; and can one wonder that a temporary return of her fever was the consequence of their irritation? Yet it is not to be imagined that her grief can be of such a nature as to combat the powerful operations of time. The insinuating voice of self-love must find a moment to steal upon the attention, and suppress the sigh which mere humanity has raised.

What

What a wicked woman is your step-mother, Julia! In truth I have not patience to speak of her in such language as your filial piety would brook; therefore I will pass over the subject without further commentation.

Need I say that my heart participates in the restoration of your tranquillity? Must I congratulate you on the loss of your lover? or shall I treat you with a specimen of my wit, exercised on itself, a subject not so inspiring perhaps, tho' no less undefinable? The truth is, I have been employing an hour, in which the two ladies have been engaged in the necessary adjustment, of some family concerns, in making an humble attempt at versification, which I leave for your entertainment, at the full expence of,

Your's, faithfully and truly,

SELIMA WORTHY.

AN INVOCATION TO WIT.

DESCEND, O sweet, fantastic sprite!
 Kindle thy wild, eccentric light,
 Inspire my frigid breast;
 Of those vile fiends, and all their train,
 Black Satire, Malice, Love-of-gain,
 Dismantled, dispossessed:

Free from that poor, ignoble rage,
 Which oft defiles thy fairest page,
 Perverts each brilliant ray;
 Which undermines thy sparkling throne,
 Upon the rubbish builds its own,
 And steals thy fame away.

In all thy native radiance dress'd,
 Most welcome be, thou sprightly guest,
 Arch, innocent, and wild,
 Enliv'ning ev'ry languid hour;
 With more success to fix thy power,
 Call thy bewitching child,

Fair, sportive Mirth; inform'd by thee,
 Easy and playful may she be,
 Unfetter'd let her rove;
 Or on light Fancy's pinions soar,
 And, gleaning from her copious store,
 Breathe pleasure, joy, and love.

Then call in Humour's antic aid,
 Bid him assist the artless maid,
 Unite your triple pow'r;

Though

Though not to flatter, fawn, and rail,
But ornament the comic tale,
And cheer the social hour.

As spangles should with taste be thrown
On fair Belinda's birth-day gown,
With art the suit to grace,
So let thy glitt'ring sparks appear,
Neither too bold, nor check'd by fear;
For Wit should know his place.

Should charms like these my steps attend,
Sure all the world would be my friend,
And hearken to my lays;
Th' admiring crowd my tricks would ape,
And ere I spake with wonder gape,
To greet me with their praise.

Alas! in vain the boon I crave:
Then on the little that I have
I'll sue Content to smile:
Content oft takes the willing's part,
And many a thorn corrodes the heart
Of full-fledged Wit the while.

LETTER

LETTER LXVI.

CAPTAIN TALBOT

TO

THE HON. VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY.

YOU could not have applied for condolence in a more propitious moment. Be it known to you, that I am a lover as well as yourself, aye and a forsaken one too. I do not pretend to match you in the pathos of my complainings, but for fortitude in bearing the weight of my misfortune I will yield to no one. With transcendent magnanimity could I behold my fair dulcinea happy with any man breathing, save and except your humble servant; yet I confess

I should enjoy a more exquisite gratification in seeing the little jade moderately corrected for the folly and ingratitude of her conduct.

I thought I had been caught, by Jupiter! and the escape seems so miraculous, that I feel as if I had fallen down a precipice, without having any bones broken in the descent.

You remember Peggy Lloyd. I believe I began to distinguish her as the most agreeable trifler of the herd before your departure from hence. I continued to do the same, and at length involved myself in an entanglement, from which I believe I never should have been liberated, but for the timely assistance of my kind enslaver, who yesterday morning set me free by a trip to the land of matrimony, with a brother subaltern, who possessed the captivating charms of poverty, to give sublimity to the ardour of his passion; and to whom it seems two thousand pounds, which were to accompany

company the hand of his charmer, proved no insuperable objection.

I like your preaching the doctrine of morality to a young fellow who has all the conscientiousness of a prelate with the animal spirits of one and twenty; when you so recently, with the additional sobriety of half a dozen years in your favour, have so far deviated from the rule of rectitude as to lay siege to the property of another. Though I have been taught to look up to you, as "a safe companion and a *judicious* friend," who possessed a probity of heart and a maturity of judgment fit to direct the career of youth into the right path, yet you may remember I ventured to admonish you on the subject, warning you of the inevitable and corroding consequences of an illicit passion; but you are a stricken deer, and I will not press further on the arrow which has pierced you.

For my own part, I am such an egregious idler, that if I stay here I shall
soon

soon become contemptible even to myself: besides, I begin to think the service of Cupid more dangerous than that of Mars, and, in short, my heart is of too combustible a nature to exist in a continual flame. These giddy chits may please, though they cannot interest; and I believe it is best to decamp, while an honourable retreat is in my power.— Therefore, if I can obtain leave of absence, and you will accept a companion in your tour upon the Continent, *allons!*

Our mingled sighs shall be dispers'd in air,
Our tears resigning to old Ocean's care.

Poetry is not my talent; yet I think I could write a stave or two on the love-smitten heroes: nevertheless I pity you, upon my soul, if the fair damsel bears any similitude to the portrait you have drawn—but there is no trusting to the pencil of a blind artist. Independent, however, of her imputed charms, she has one admitted claim to my veneration, for preserving my friend from an

evil, which would have proved a mortal wound to the future contentment of his life. A man of sentiment involved in an intrigue, I conceive to be the most pitiable object of the creation; so pray let your lamentations subside at once, in gratitude for having escaped entailing on yourself a character the most despicable, and most unworthy the principles of your heart.

Let me hear further of your travelling plan; and having obtained permission, for which I shall apply per post, I will tuck up my knapsack, and attend punctually the rendezvous you shall think proper to appoint. Yours, sincerely,

HENRY TALBOT

BETTER

LETTER XLVII.

SELIMA

TO
MISS WESTBURN.

MY dear Julia, I know not how to write; yet where can I find so consolatory an employment? I fear you will think me fretful and captious in suffering so trivial an occurrence to lie so heavily on my heart. It appears a childish affliction, I confess; but it is such an one as I am too much a child to disregard.

I returned here yesterday. Mrs. Leslie has been gone a week, and the Melfords dined with us, to welcome their favorite on her return. I cannot say I feel my-

self highly gratified by their partiality, as it only subjects me to a tiresome and indiscriminate flattery, which a reciprocal friendship does not instigate me to return.

The old beau, the two sides of his face having regained their uniformity by a second application of the razor, was little less captivating than before, and equally assiduous; though his attention was of that authoritative kind, as seemed rather to demand respect and awe, than humbly to solicit any tenderer sentiment. He placed himself as usual at my right hand; and amongst many (more useful I doubt not than palatable) documents, my poor flaxen ringlets became the innocent objects of his opprobrium. At first I was more diverted than chagrined at the peculiarity of his notions, which however growing very importunate and troublesome, I was at last proportionably provoked at his impertinence, which I certainly should have

have resented to any other person than the visitor, or in any other place than the house of Mrs. Aubrey: Respect and duty restrained the effects of my vexation, and I contented myself with trying to change the subject of the conversation, till it was taken up in a quarter which immediately did away its insignificance. Mrs. Anne, who at first acknowledged that she thought the hair flowing in natural curls on the shoulder a very pretty and becoming ornament to youth, yielded by degrees to the arguments of my tormentor, and at length undertook for me that I should cheerfully submit to the more experienced judgment of so valuable a friend.

Perceiving my repugnance (which I am ashamed to acknowledge) to the performance of the engagement she had entered into on my part,

“ My dear Selima,” said she, “ I am shocked and surprized to observe so perverse an obstinacy engrafted in your temper.”

temper." "Madam," said I, "if it is *your* command"—"It has not been my custom to *command*, Miss Worthy," returned she, "where my wish is not adequate to the attainment of its purpose, I never desire to enforce any other claim upon your actions."

"It ever has been," said I, "and Heaven forbid it should ever cease to be so whilst I"—

All power of utterance was gone; but I was happily out of the room before the tears started from my eyes, and I flew to gratify the wish of my ever-honoured friend; not chearfully I acknowledge, but with a resignation perfectly unmixed. Vanity, I do not deny, had a momentary share in my reluctance, but offended beneficence and maternal love now occupied every crevice of my heart, and alone excited its emotions.

My flowing tresses were soon decently concealed under a close muslin cap, in
short

short: nothing less than a night-cap ; for indeed I was not possessed of any other. The œconomy of the head was much sooner adjusted than that of the heart. But not to suffer a tedious absence to take the appearance of an encouraged petulance, I ventured to exhibit my metamorphosed figure in the drawing-room without delay, where the dear supporter of my friendless infancy amply rewarded me for this worthless sacrifice to gratitude and obedience, by folding me in her protecting arms, and calling me her beloved Selima.

I was also overwhelmed with encomiums from the rest of the company, which I was compelled to return with all the outward forms of ceremonious civility, whilst they were inwardly received with the sensations of disgust and contempt. What a bugbear is sincerity! and what a scene of warfare would be the great stage of life, were it not taught by the all-ruling manager,
despotic

despotic Custom, its timely "exits and its entrances." What a lamentable reflexion! and how strongly does it mark the depravity of the human race! But I am launching into an almost unfathomable theme, which, with your leave, I will relinquish to some more able pen, before I plunge myself beyond my depth; and take the liberty to remind you, that you are two letters in my debt. Do not neglect to write, for I am in need of consolation. I would fain regard this simple event with the indifference it deserves; but I cannot help dreading, as a prelude to future uneasiness, the increasing influence of the Melfords in this family. Alas! tho' grieved most sensibly, I may not yet be aware of the full weight of the loss I have sustained in the wise counsels of my second parent, the ever-considerate and affectionate Mrs. Leslie.

In the midst of my own distresses I have not been unmindful of what was due from the ties of gratitude and friendship.

friendship. If I can be an humble instrument, under the hands of Providence, in accelerating the happiness of two worthy people, it will be laying up a certain charm to alleviate my own afflictions. Having learnt that my banish'd friend Courtley still remained at Plymouth, in daily expectation of orders to embark, I cut out the decent paragraph which merely noticed the death of Sir Richard Kiteley, without any of the shocking circumstances attending it, from the newspaper, inclosed it in a blank cover, and directed it to him, earnestly wishing, if he had not been before informed of the event, that it might be received in time to prevent the performance of his intended voyage.

Fare you well. *Poor Miss* may now congratulate herself on the acquisition of a sister-mope, in the person of her poor, mobled friend,

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER XLVIII.

MRS. LESLIE.

SELIMA.

I know not whether to console with my dear girl on the slight disadvantage her appearance has undergone, or to congratulate her on the victory her temper and good sense have obtained over the principal foible which they had to combat. Trifling as the sacrifice might appear in the opinion of an old woman, I have not quite forgot its weight in the estimation of a youthful mind, nor would I derogate from the merit of the resignation. I know you enjoy an ample

ple recompence in the retrospection of having acted right. Never may my beloved Selima forfeit the consolatory balm of an approving conscience! Indeed I have not suffered a doubt to pervade my breast of the stability of your principles: with joy have I beheld in you not only a delicacy of sentiment, but a strength of judgment, capable I trust of directing you through every vicissitude of life, which the yet-unseen purposes of fate may have ordained you to encounter. Do not lose sight of your manifold obligations to that kind friend, who snatched you from the jaws of poverty, ignorance, and distress; and let the eventual circumstances of your situation be what they may, you never can be precipitated into any act of disobedience or ingratitude, which must plant a thorn of contrition in your breast.

I have too much reason to believe that your fears of the designs of Mr. Melford are not ill-grounded; yet I flatter myself,

myself, that the tender submission of your benefactress to your determined refusal of Dr. Smith, may serve as a security against any more interesting apprehensions. I have already fully expressed my sentiments on this subject to our common friend; but if an erroneous principle is admitted to fully the lustre of Mrs. Aubrey's character, it is a tendency to ambition, a foible which is inherent in her family, and from infancy has been sedulously instilled into her mind: therefore, whether it be in your power or not to subject your heart to a concurrence with your duty, I hope it is unnecessary to remind you, that it is your duty to make the effort. But if that proves ineffectual, I never will urge you to act in direct opposition to its dictates. I love my friend, and I love my child—(O Selima! you have filled up an aching void in the heart of a disconsolate mother)—and their mutual inter-

rest

rest shall ever be equally balanced on the steady beam of my affections.

I found my brother in a somewhat better state of health than I expected : but his appearance is so much changed, by the ravages of sickness and affliction, that had I met him as a stranger, I should not have recognised a relation in his person. His reception of an almost-forgotten sister was truly gratifying to my feelings ; and the pleasure he expresses in the society of a retrieved friend, I flatter myself, affords him a reciprocal satisfaction.

I fear it will be long before I can revisit the much-loved inhabitants of Heathcott : in the interim my heart is with you ; and should it be your fate (which Heaven avert !) to stand in need of more actual services, I hope the happiness of administering them will now be as much within the power as it ever has been, and will continue, whilst I

have life, the ardent wish of your affectionate friend,

CAROLINE LESLIE.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



